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PHILIPPINE DAILY
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By Michael Lim Ubac

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But Majority Leader Prospero

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HOUSE Minority Leader Francis Escudero speaks during a picket against Con-ass outside the Batasan. At right, Senate President Manuel Villar presents the Senate resolution opposing the proposed House-only constituent assembly.

ROGER MARGALLO/JOAN BONDOC

Bishop urges AFP soldiers: Join rally

By Christian V. Esguerra
and Philip C. Tubeza
in Manila
and Jhunnex Napallacan
Inquirer Visayas

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BISHOP URGES/ A6

Not the time to Cha-cha, legal experts tell Senate

By TJ Burgonio

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If at all, a referendum should be held simultaneously with the May 2007 elections or much later with the 2010 presidential elections, on whether the people agree to Charter change (Cha-cha) via Con-ass or a constitutional convention (Con-con) after a massive public information drive, Bernas and Mendoza said.

"There may be a need for change," said Mendoza. "This is not the time. The times do not seem to be propitious.

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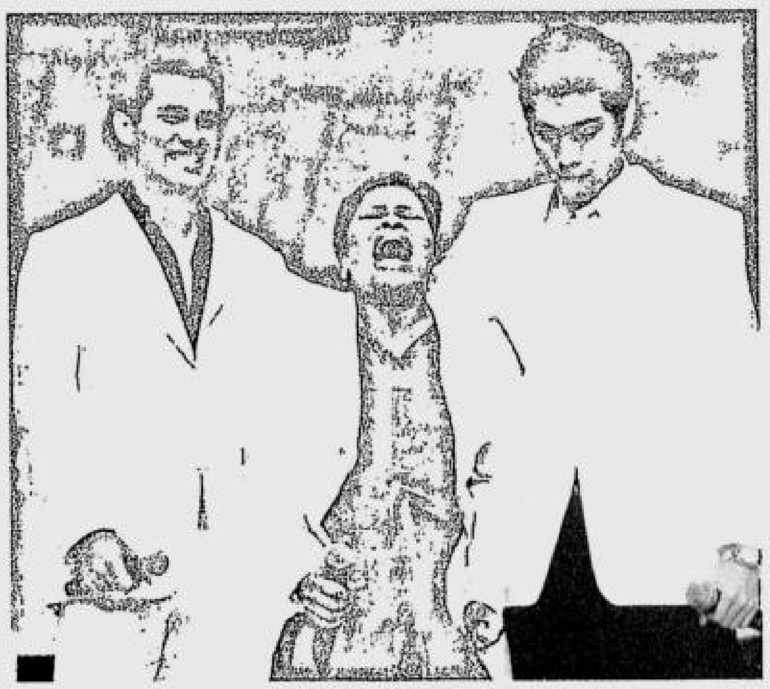

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By Dona Pazzibugan and Inquirer Visayas

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'Old town' for posterity, says developer

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By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

(Second of two parts)

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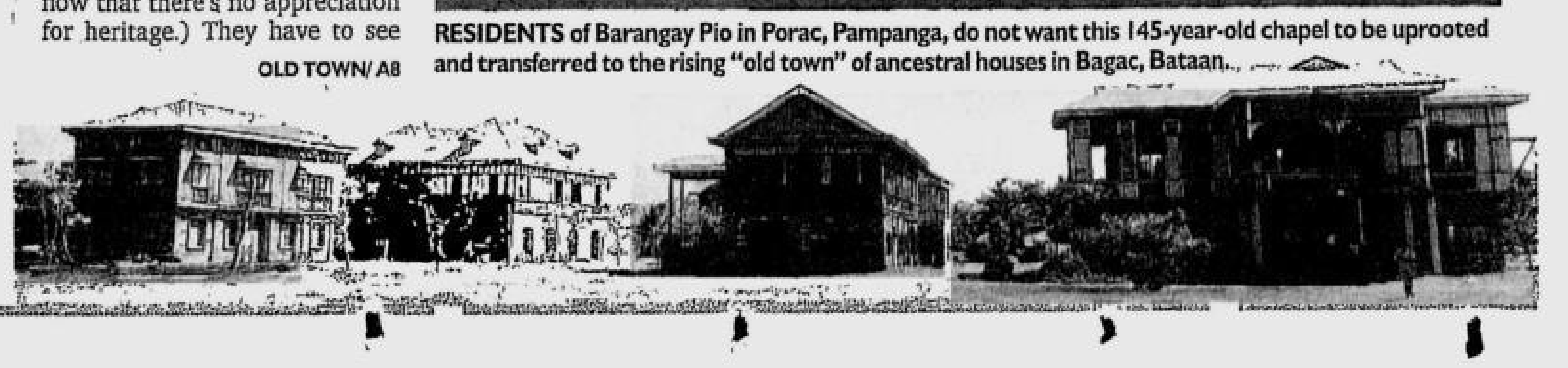

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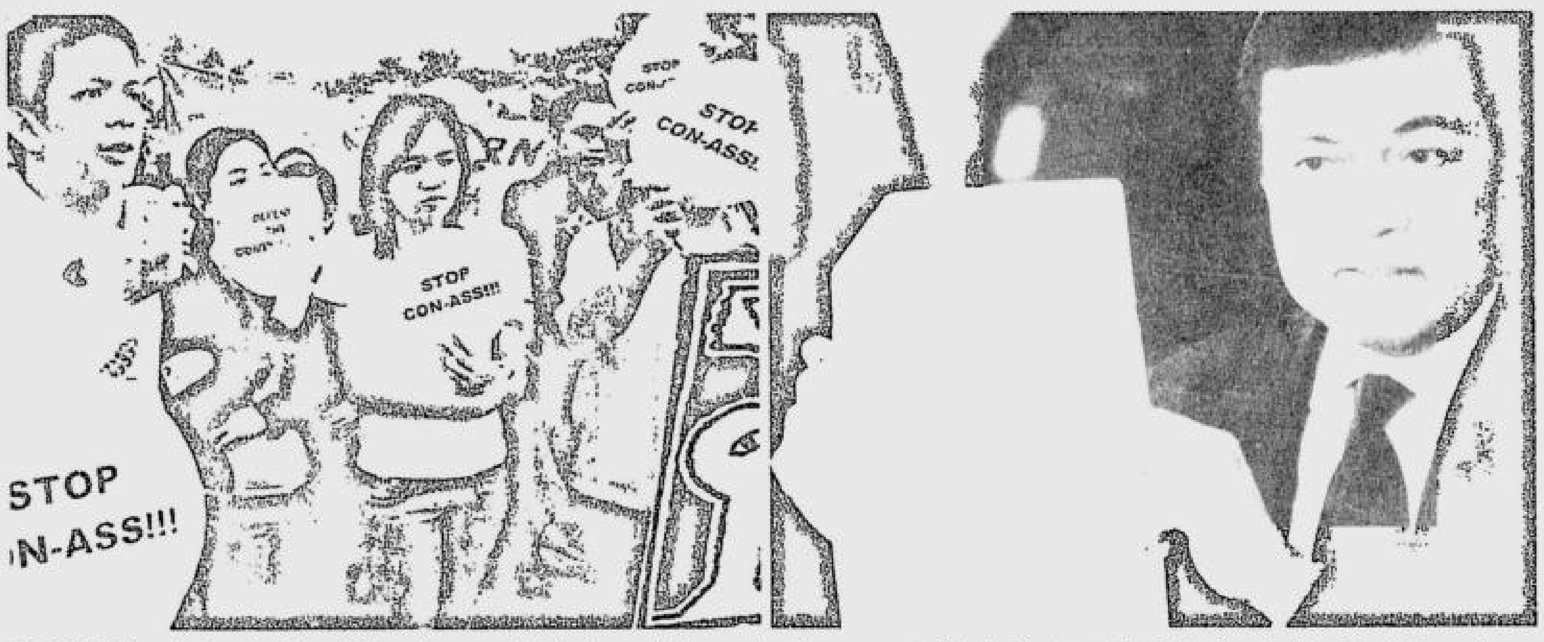
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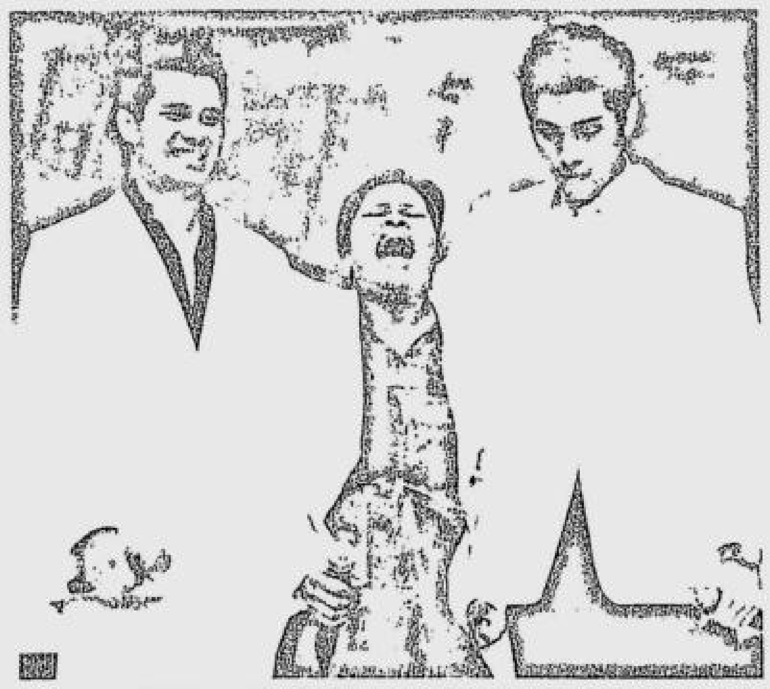

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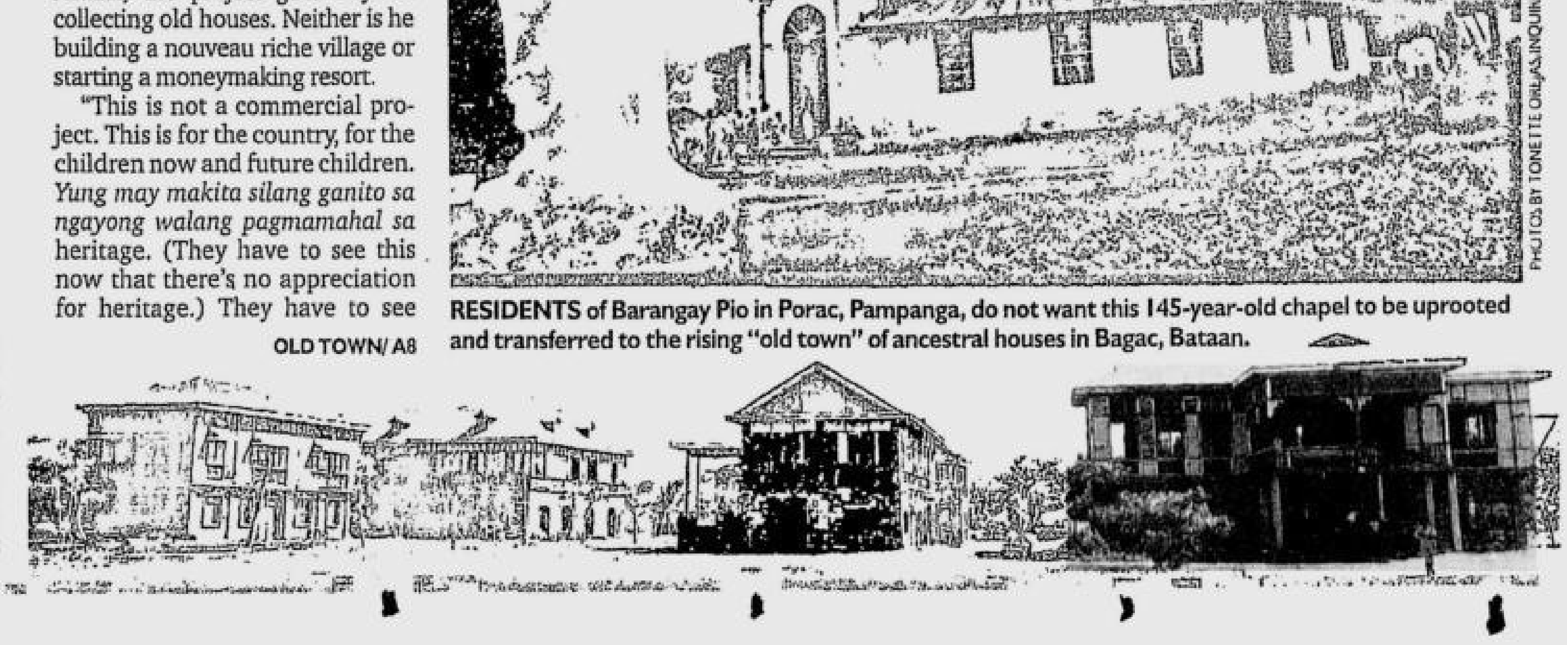


PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2006

Second FRONTPAGE

E-mail: pr_news@inquirer.com.ph

Text us your feedback: inquirer news name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) or 283 (Smart)

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Lubang Island and Calamian Group of Islands will have rains and occasional gusty winds. Luzon will have cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers becoming widespread rains over the Eastern section. The rest of the country will be cloudy with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms.

COMPILED BY: KATE PEDROSO, INQUIRER RESEARCH/12/11/06 SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Cloudy with Rains	Iloilo/Bacolod	Partly Cloudy
Baguio	Cloudy with Rains	Roxas	Partly Cloudy
Tuguegarao	Rains	Cebu	Partly Cloudy
Laoag	Cloudy with Rains	Tacloban	Partly Cloudy
Clark Zone	Cloudy with Rains	Gen. Santos	Partly Cloudy
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Partly Cloudy
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Partly Cloudy
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Partly Cloudy

Alleged Al-Qaida bank account frozen

By Armand N. Nocum

THE COURT OF APPEALS HAS FROZEN THE BANK account of the Saudi-based International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), which is in the Bank of the Philippine Islands and believed to be a source of funding for the international terrorist network Al-Qaida and affiliated groups like the local Abu Sayyaf.

Acting on a petition of the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC), the appellate court said there was "probable cause" to believe that the IIRO account here was being used to fund terrorist activities in the country.

"Having determined that probable cause exists thus finding merit in the petition, a freeze order, effective for a period of 20 days against account no. 020010010000011145671 in the name of the Islamic Relief Organization with BPI and all related web accounts is granted and subject bank is also ordered to submit to this Court and the AMLC a detailed return on the freeze order within 24 hours from receipt," the CA said.

The AMLC sought the freezing of the IIRO's bank account in the country after the US Department of Treasury issued a press statement citing the involvement of IIRO's branches in the Philippines and Indonesia in fund-raising for Al-Qaida and its affiliated groups.

In a four-page resolution issued by Associate Justice Arcangelita Romilla-Lontok, the CA's Third Division noted that the US press release further disclosed that the IIRO's branch in the country served as a liaison for ASG and other Islamic extremist groups.

It its petition, AMLC cited the approval of the United Nations 1267 Sanctions Committee Aug. 4, 2006, for the inclusion of the Philippine branch of the IIRO and its officer, Abd Al-Hamid Sulaiman Al-Mujil, in its list of individuals and entities associated with acknowledged Al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden.

Al-Mujil is the executive director of the Eastern province of IRRO in Saudi Arabia.

The AMLC further stated that the US government, through its embassy in Manila, had requested the assistance of the Philippine government to look into the existence of funds and economic resources, including property or interests in property owned or controlled directly or indirectly by Al Mujil and IIRO's Philippine branch, and to freeze the same if any be found.

Investigation conducted by AMLC revealed the existence of Account Nos. 020010010000011145671 and 020020010000012000472 under the name of IRRO in BPI. However, further investigation showed that only account no. 020010010000011145671 was active.

Prices Of Prime Commodities Must Be Closely Monitored This Holiday Season

The **Consumer & Oil Price Watch (COPW)** urges the government to closely **monitor prices of chicken** and other prime commodities this holiday season.

COPW takes this stand in view of the following:

1. Typhoons Milenyo and Reming have disrupted chicken supply. As a result, the Department of Agriculture **(DA)** has authorized local producers and importers to import five million kilos of chicken from the US and Canada to cover the deficiency.
2. **Chicken supply in Metro Manila is alarmingly low. Cold storage facilities for chicken are almost empty and deliveries from the Broiler Raisers to the Broiler Integrators are on a hand-to-mouth basis.**

THUS, the DA and the Department of Trade MUST:

1. Establish the selling price at each and every level of the distribution chain: from the farm gates to the distributors to the supermarkets and wet markets.

   This will deter profiteering during the holidays when supply will be tight and ensure that prices of fully-dressed chicken can be maintained in the P110 - P120 per kilo range, especially since the cost of imported leg quarters is P75 per kilo.
2. Instruct **PABI** and **UBRA** to provide **COPW** with their daily production inventory, as well as the **import arrivals** of San Miguel, Universal Robina, Swift Foods and Tyson Agriventures.

THIS WILL ENSURE THAT CONSUMERS WILL HAVE ADEQUATE SUPPLY.

Meanwhile, the Flour Millers and the Bakery Associations have assured that **the prices of bakery products WILL NOT increase during the holidays** as there is sufficient supply of flour in the market. In addition, the other cost components of bread such as sugar and LPG have either gone down or remained stable.

It is ESSENTIAL that consumer prices are kept stable.

COPW had already expressed apprehension on the stability of consumer prices but at the Nov. 27 meeting of the National Price Coordinating Council **(NPCC)**, **the members committed that prices WILL NOT increase during the holiday season.**

On December 6, a very timely and productive consultation meeting on the prices, demand & supply of prime commodities was convened by Senator Mar Roxas, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Trade and Commerce.

The government was represented by senior officials of the Department of Agriculture and Undersecretary Zenaida Maglaya of the Department of Trade and Industry **(DTI)**. Also present were the Meat & Poultry Producers, Broiler Raisers & Broiler Integrators, Producers of milk & sugar, Flour Millers, Bakery Associations, as well as Supermarket and Market Vendors.

Senator Roxas has called for another meeting on December 18 to assess the movement of prices and the supply situation.

COPW Commitment to the Consuming Public

COPW will hire additional manpower that will monitor prices daily from December 12 to 23.

Any violation will be reported immediately to the DTI and DA for proper action.

For online posting of COPW issues, log on to http://groups.yahoo.com/group/COPW/

CPW CONSUMER & OIL PRICE WATCH

Raul Concepcion
RAUL T. CONCEPCION
Chairman

Text your comments to Hotline 0917-8103363
or call Direct Line 844-8785; Fax: 818-6203 • E-mail: rtc@cii.com.ph

Those dissatisfied with GMA still a constant number

FOR THE LAST TWO-AND-A-HALF YEARS, President Macapagal-Arroyo's national net satisfaction rating has been consistently negative, according to the Social Weather Stations.

In November this year, 34 percent of people surveyed were satisfied with the President's performance, while 47 percent were dissatisfied, for a net rating of -13 for the period. It was -11 in September, or the third quarter, according to the SWS survey.

This was "statistically similar" to the 37 percent satisfied and 48 percent dissatisfied in the third quarter, and the 34 percent satisfied and 48 percent dissatisfied in the second quarter of this year.

The President's national net satisfaction rating has been sliding since the third quarter of 2004 up to the fourth quarter of 2006, as reflected in the SWS surveys.

Dissatisfaction with Ms Arroyo was prevalent across the country and in all socioeconomic classes, the survey said, with the President's net satisfaction rating declining even in the Visayas, (from +6 in September to -7 in November) and among members of class E (from -18 to -25).

Ms Arroyo's rating was even more dismal among urban dwellers who gave her a rating of -21 in November. Rural dwellers were more forgiving but nevertheless still dissatisfied, giving her a rating of -3 in the same period.

The most dissatisfied areas were now Metro Manila and Luzon (both -16 in November), followed by Mindanao (-12) and the Visayas (-7).

The President's rating in Metro Manila improved from -41 in September to -16 in November. The percentage of those who were satisfied with her performance increased in the capital, from 23 percent in September to 32 percent in November.

She also had a lower dissatisfaction rating among class ABC, from -20 in September to -14 in November. The percentage of those dissatisfied with her performance among the upper and middle class decreased from 56 percent in September to 47 percent in November.

Kate Pedroso, Inquirer Research

'Bono' charges Con-ass solons with graft

FORMER BATASAN ASSEMBLYMAN Homobono Adaza yesterday charged with graft before the Office of the Ombudsman Speaker Jose de Venecia and all House members who voted for a House resolution convening Congress into a constituent assembly (Con-ass) even without a counterpart resolution from the Senate.

Adaza, also a former immigration commissioner and a former professor of constitutional law at Xavier University in Cagayan de Oro City, said De Venecia and the congressmen, in violating the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, caused undue damage to the Filipino people.

"They wanted to do something unconstitutional. They agitated everybody. How can that not be putting (Filipinos) in harm's way?" Adaza told the INQUIRER.

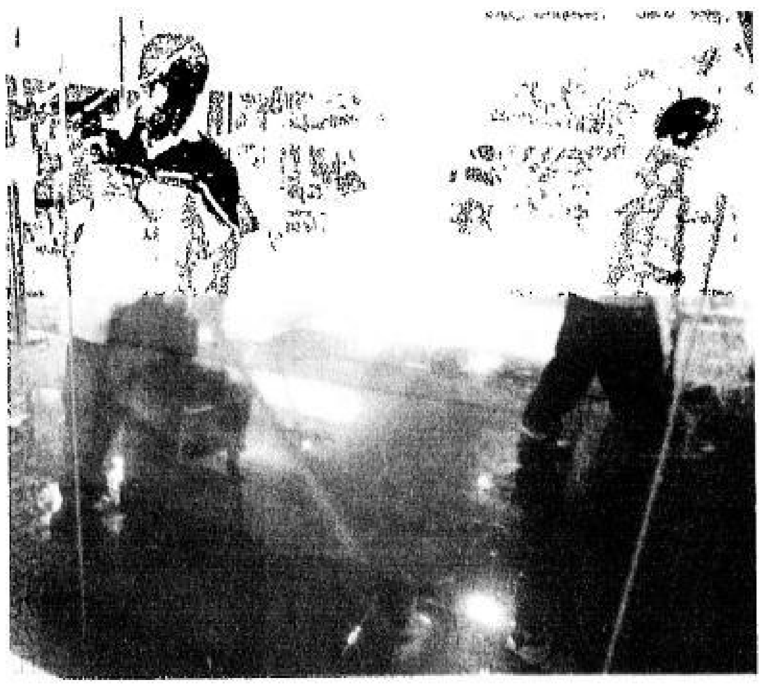
House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles Jr. and Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay yesterday said Adaza had no case against them as the House resolution to convene Congress into a constituent assembly caused nobody any harm.

"That case is ridiculous," Nograles said. "It won't fly. We did what we thought was our right to amend the Charter. And if we passed it and the people ratified it in a plebiscite, will he file against all the people who voted too?"

"The guy wants a federal Mindanao. How can we do this without amending the Constitution? Ask him," he said.

Adaza named as respondents De Venecia, Nograles, Pichay, House committee on constitutional amendments chair Rep. Constantino Jaraula, Davao del Sur Rep. Douglas Cagas, Con-ass resolution sponsor Rep. Luis Villafuerte, "and the rest of the members of Congress who voted for the passage of resolutions calling on Congress to adopt proposals to amend the constitution."

"Every scoundrel claims that he's doing it for his country," Adaza said. *Norman Bordadora and Philip C. Tubeza*



AT LEAST THEY FINISHED THE VENUE ON TIME. Maintenance crews continuously mop up the lobby of the brand new Cebu International Convention Center as Tropical Storm Seniang brought heavy rains to the city over the weekend and forced the postponement of the 12th Asean Leaders' Summit until January.

REM ZAMORA

New Asean meet sked up to leaders, says Malacañang

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG CANNOT YET say for certain if the deferred summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) will push through next month as proposed by Philippine organizers.

The proposal was subject to the availability of the leaders of Asean member-nations, namely, Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Burma (Myanmar), the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

In an interview following the meeting of the National Disaster Coordinating Council meeting at Camp Aguinaldo, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita conceded that getting all the 10 leaders as well as regional partners China, Japan and South Korea to agree to attend the rescheduled summit on Jan. 10 to 13 as proposed by the government would be difficult considering the short time period. "Some of these leaders might have already made prior commitments," he added.

So far, the leaders of four Asean countries said they would be attending the rescheduled summit in January. They were Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Thai Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont, Malaysian Premier Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, according to the spokespersons for their respective countries.

It remained unclear whether any leaders from Australia, China, Japan, India, South Korea and New Zealand would be able to attend.

Those countries help to make up the East Asia Summit, which was to have been held alongside the Asean in Cebu.

It has been widely reported that Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is unlikely to attend the postponed summits due to his plan to visit Europe and his parliamentary commitments.

He has been reported to be planning to visit Europe from Jan. 9 through 14.

The announcement of the summit's cancellation came a day after Britain, Australia, the United States and other nations warned against travel to Cebu, citing fears of a terrorist attack.

Arroyo spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said on Monday that the postponement "has been understood by the countries and the leaders concerned." He urged the local political opposition to stop riding on the issue.

"What is important is we are now working based on a new schedule for the summit which we expect to be as constructive and productive as ever," he said. *With AFP*

EOS DIGITAL
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Delighting You Always

CANON SHOOT& RUN 06

Join the 2006 Canon Shoot & Run Photo Contest - the first-ever photography marathon in the Philippines to be held on December 16, 2006. Participants will be given limited time to shoot a variety of topics and will get a chance to win ₱100,000 in cash and over ₱300,000 worth of Canon gear.

Think you've got what it takes to capture the perfect shot? Register now!

The competition is open to all amateur and professional photographers*.
Deadline of registration is on December 15, 2006 at 12:00 PM

For more information, visit www.canon.com.ph/clubeos/shootandrun

*A digital SLR camera is required in order to participate. Non-Canon DSLR users are required to pay a P500 joining fee.

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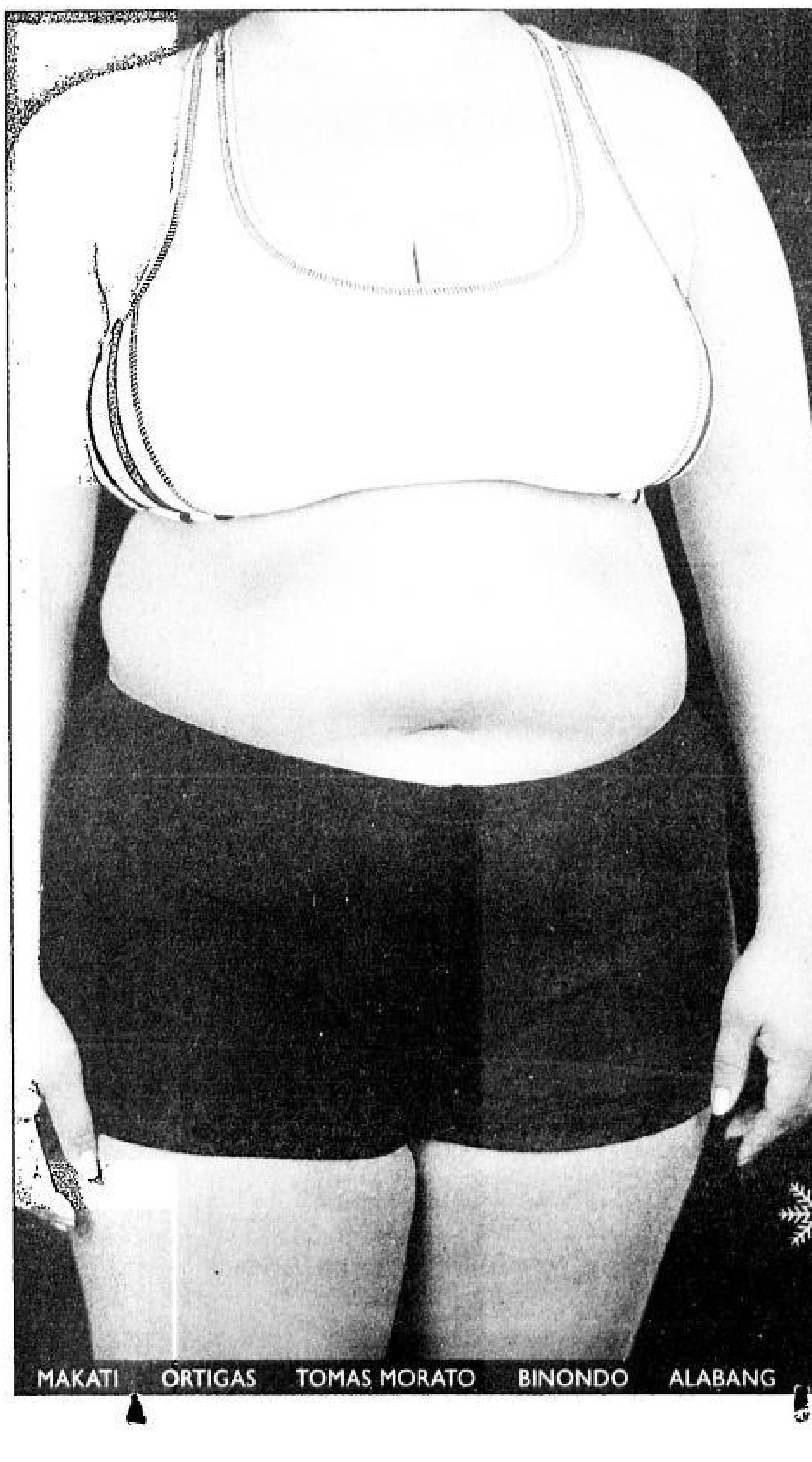
Trillanes finally registers

DETAINED REBEL soldier and political aspirant Navy Lt. Antonio Trillanes 1V was finally able to register as a voter on Sunday after he failed to do so the first time due to technicality, an election assistant said.

Trillanes on Friday had failed to register as a voter in his home district of Camarin, Caloocan City, because the Commission on Elections only allowed voter registration from Sunday to Thursday.

The 35-year-old leader of the so-called "Magdalo" group that took over Makati's Premier Oakwood Hotel in July 2003, returned to the Comelec office late Sunday morning accompanied by Marine guards and his lawyer.

He was met by his mother, some supporters and curious residents while he awaited his turn to register. Wearing blue denims and a checkered shirt, he posed for photographs with friends and Comelec personnel. His military guards stayed outside the Comelec area. *Dona Pazzibugan and Nancy Carvajal*



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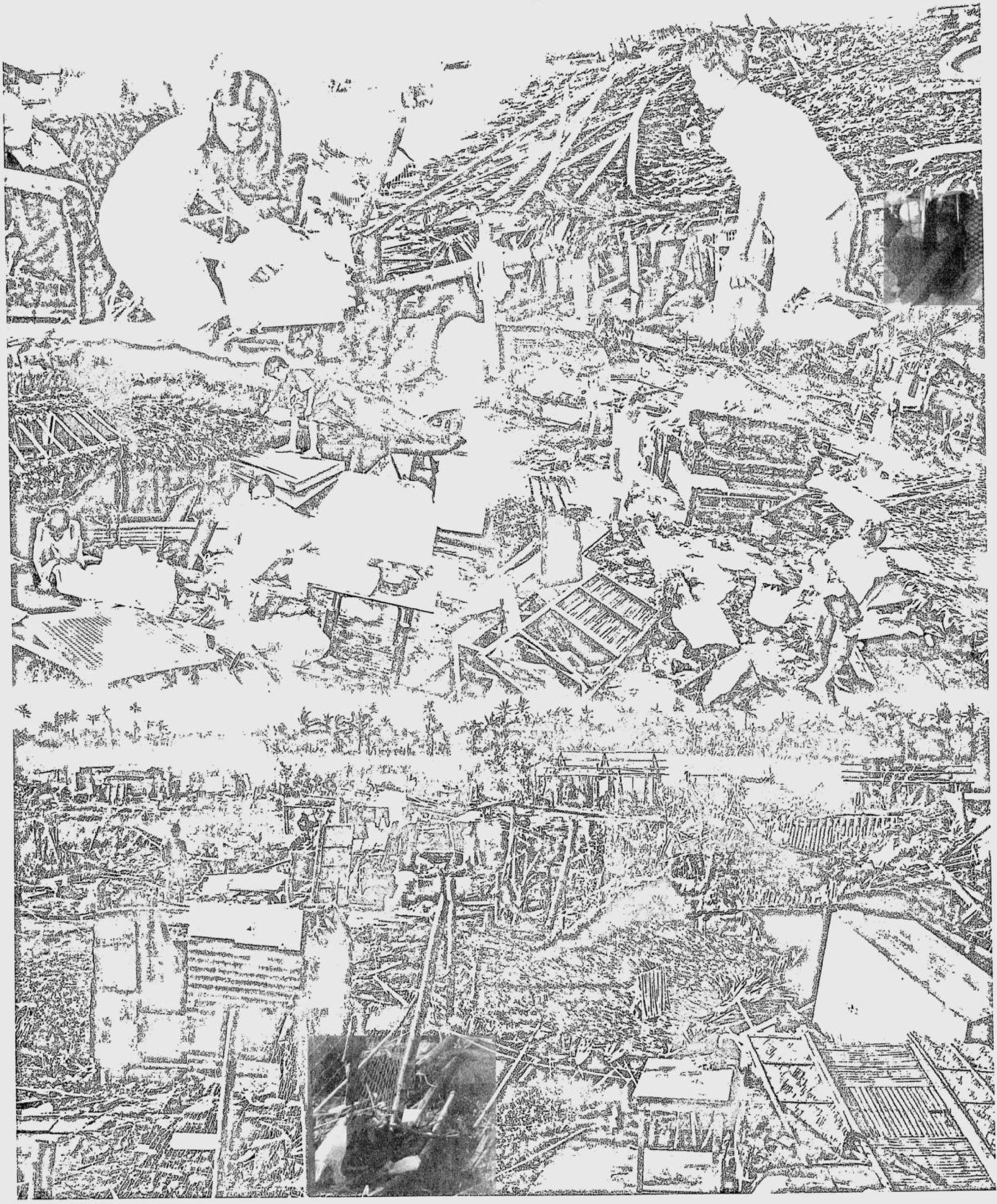

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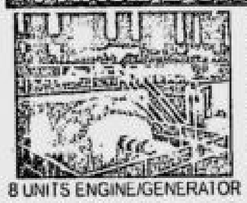

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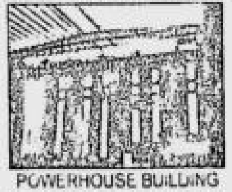

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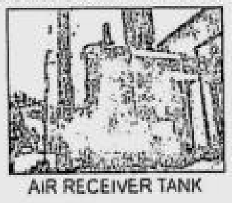

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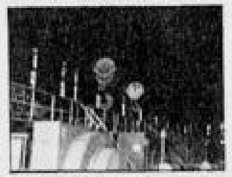

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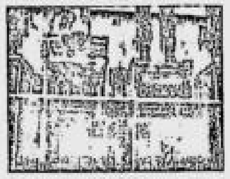

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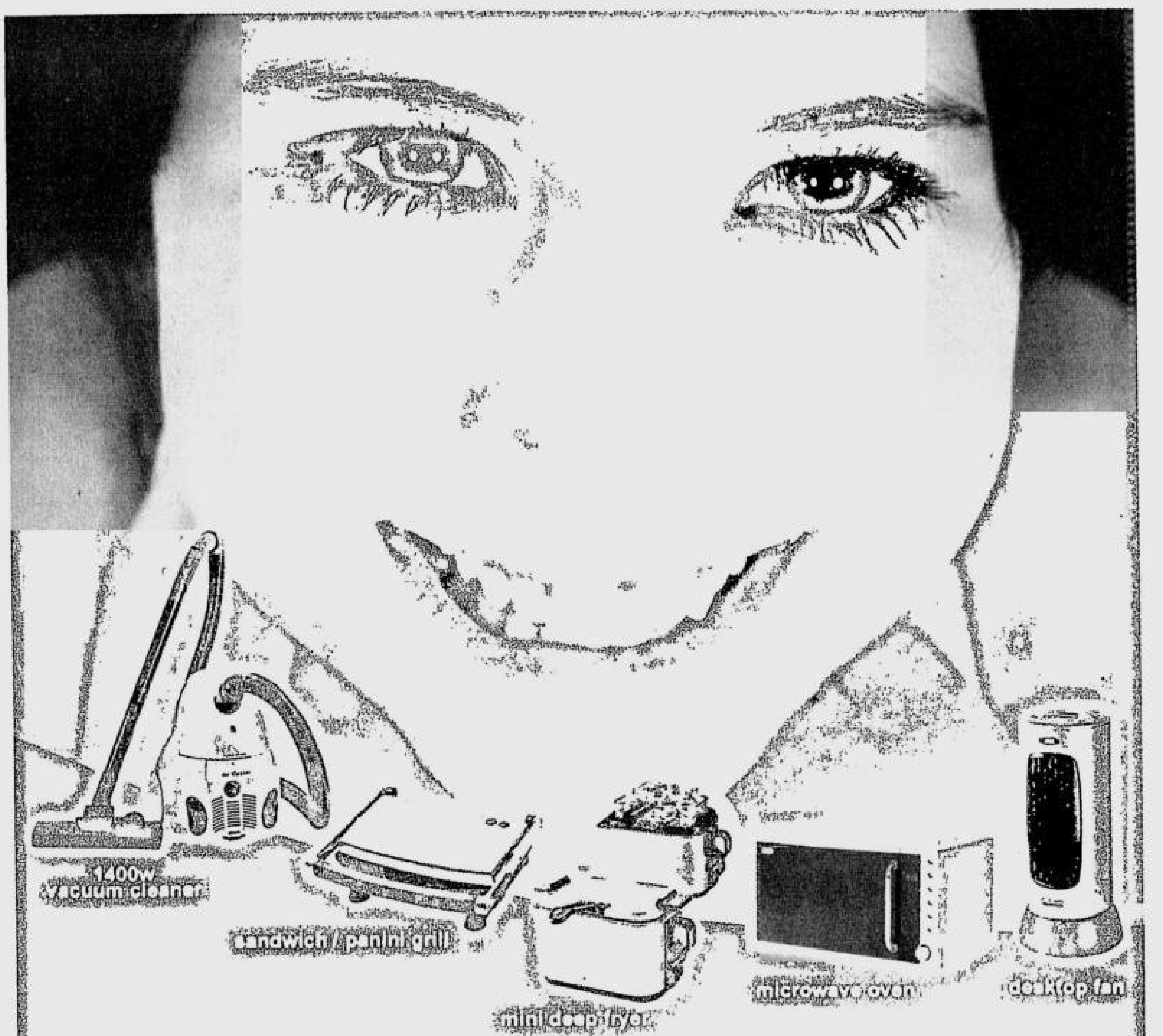

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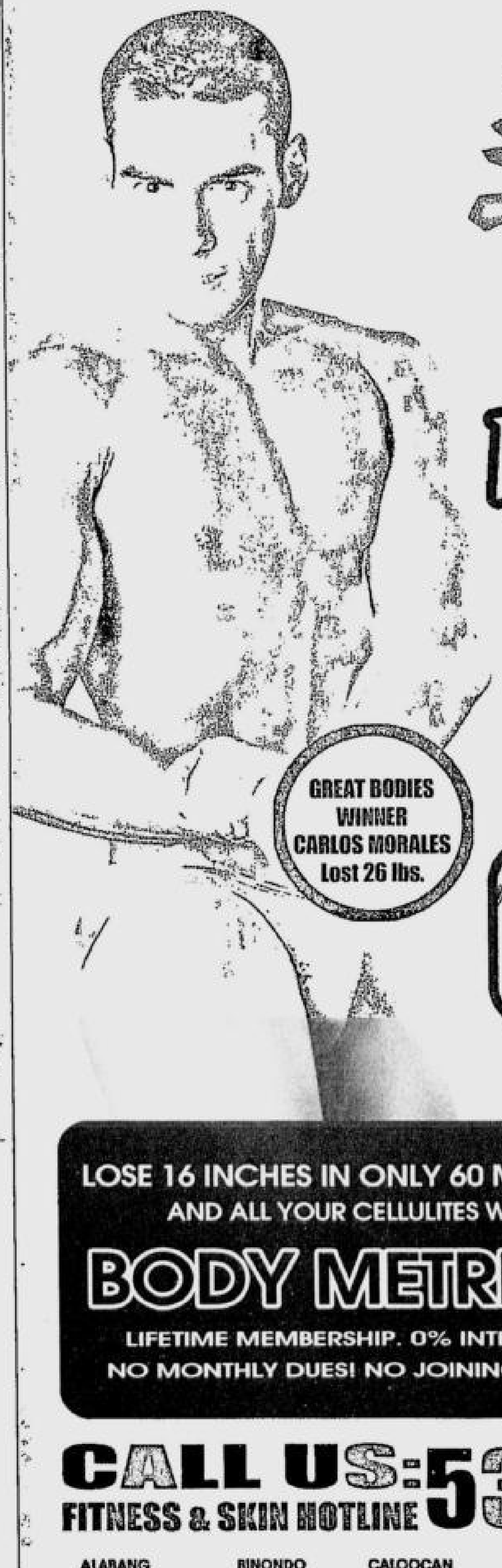

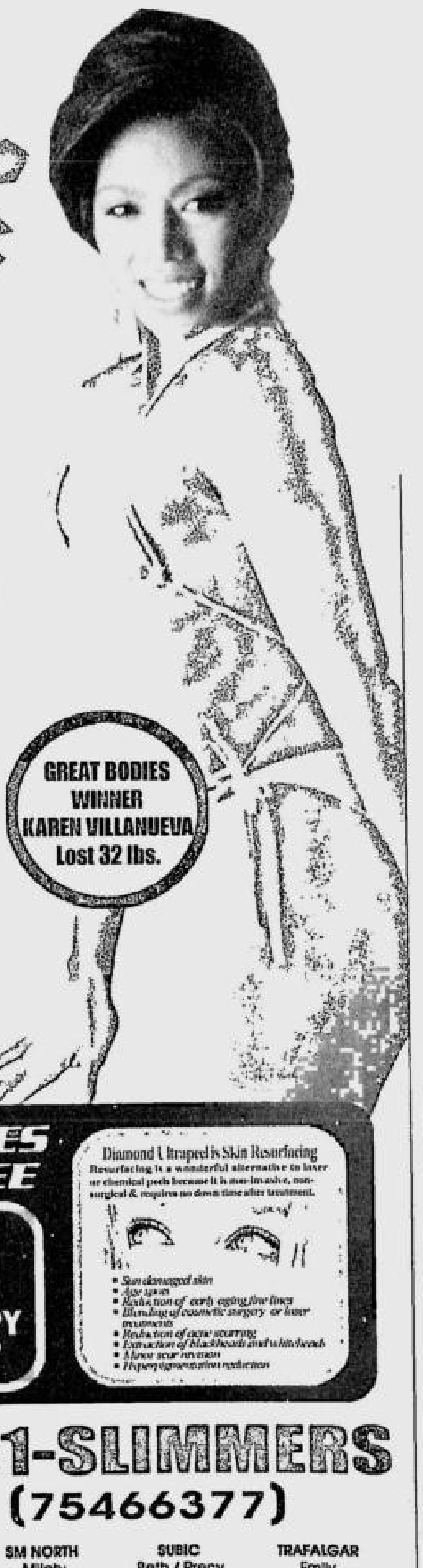

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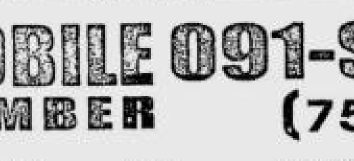

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Ex-Chilean dictator Pinochet ...

From page A1

His death exposed deep divisions in society as Chileans wept—or celebrated his demise with champagne.

Supporters saw Pinochet as a Cold War hero for overthrowing democratically elected President Salvador Allende in 1973 when the United States was working to destabilize his Marxist government and keep Chile from exporting communism in Latin America.

But the world soon recoiled in horror as Santiago's main soccer stadium filled with political prisoners who were tortured, shot, disappeared or forced into exile.

Pinochet's dictatorship laid the groundwork for South America's most stable economy, but his crackdown on dissent left a lasting legacy: His name has become a byword for the state terror—in many cases secretly supported by Washington—that retarded democratic change across the hemisphere.

'Criminal has departed'

"This criminal has departed without ever being sentenced for all the acts he was responsible for during his dictatorship," lamented Hugo Gutierrez, a human rights lawyer involved in several lawsuits against Pinochet.

Lorena Pizarro, president of an association of relatives of the dictatorship's victims, said it was ironic that Pinochet died "on Dec. 10, the international day of human rights."

Celebrations broke out in several parts of the Chilean capital. At a major plaza, hundreds of cheering, flag-waving people gathered to pop champagne corks and toss confetti.

Later on Sunday, young demonstrators marched to the presidential palace to denounce Pinochet's legacy. They threw rocks at passing vehicles and erected fire barricades. Police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse the demonstrators, but the clashes spread past midnight to several working class districts.

Deputy Interior Minister Felipe Harboe appealed for peace. "We do not want people to be affected today by facts of the past," he said.

Chile's saviors

Outside the hospital where Pinochet died, however, Chileans who believed he saved them from communism wept and hoisted posters with the dictator's image. Some chanted that Pinochet and his feared secret police were Chile's saviors.

"He will live forever in my memory—I love him as much as my own children," said Margarita Sanchez.

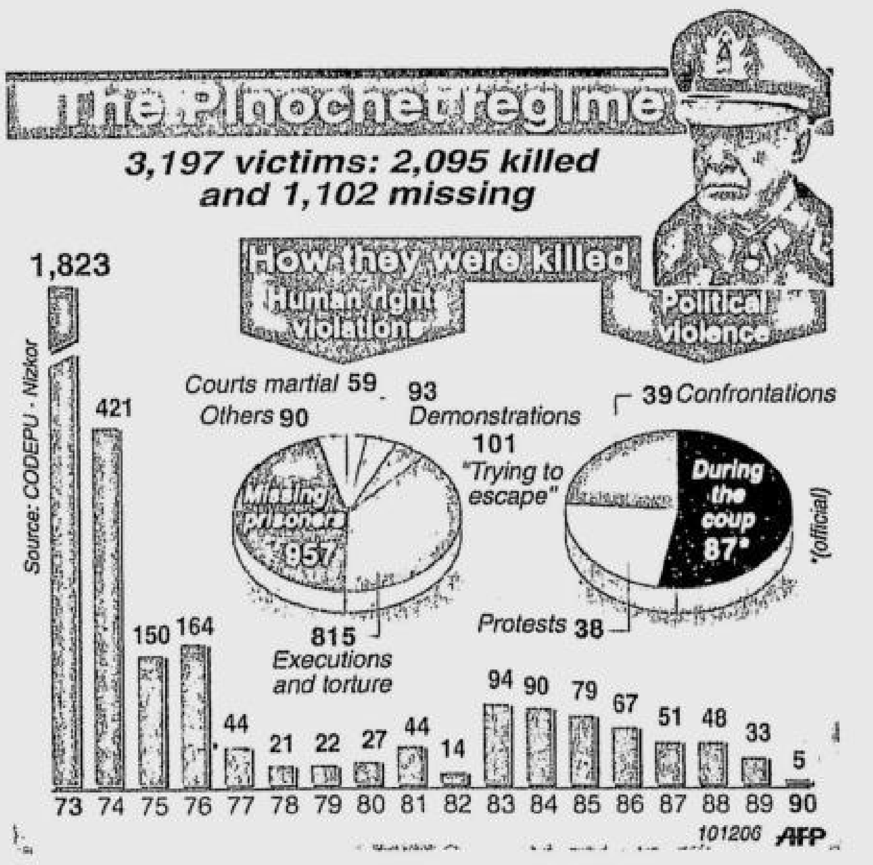
The mustachioed Pinochet left no doubt about who was in charge after the Sept. 11, 1973, coup when warplanes bombed the presidential palace and Allende committed suicide with a submachine gun that Cuban leader Fidel Castro had given him.

"Not a leaf moves in this country if I'm not moving it," Pinochet said.

According to Chile's government, at least 3,197 people were killed during Pinochet's rule. Even so, courts allowed the aging general to escape hundreds of criminal complaints as his health declined.

For years, Pinochet refused to take responsibility for his regime's abuses, blaming subordinates for murders or tortures.

Only on his 91st birthday last month did Pinochet take "full political responsibility for everything that happened" during his reign. He said he had to act to prevent Chile's economic and political disintegration, but made no reference to the rights abuses.



Allende's mistake

Pinochet was born into a middle-class family on Nov. 25, 1915, in the port of Valparaiso. His father was a customs official while his mother was a strict disciplinarian who encouraged her eldest son to become a military officer.

Allende, who mistakenly thought Pinochet would defend constitutional rule, appointed him Army commander just 19 days before he launched his US-backed coup against the Marxist government.

After Pinochet seized power, soldiers herded many leftists into the National Stadium, which became a torture and detention center. Other leftists were rounded up by death squads, and the "Caravan of Death" to Chile's forbidding Atacama desert left victims buried in unmarked mass graves.

Pinochet disbanded Congress, banned political activity and crushed dissent. In addition to the dead, more than 1,000 victims remain unaccounted for. Thousands more were arrested, tortured and forced into exile.

Pinochet defended his authoritarian rule as a crusade to build a society free of communism. He even claimed partial credit for the collapse of the Soviet bloc. "I am good, I consider myself an angel," he told a Miami Spanish-language television station in 2003.

Pinochet showed no mercy to his enemies. When investigators uncovered coffins that had been stuffed with two bodies each in the aftermath of the coup, he dismissed it as a "a good cemetery space-saving measure."

Rebuilding economy

Pinochet seized power at a time when Chile's economy was in near ruins, partly due to the CIA's covert destabilization efforts and partly to Allende's mismanagement.

He launched a radical free-market program that at first triggered a financial collapse and unprecedented joblessness. But it laid the basis for South America's healthiest economy, which has grown by 5 percent to 7 percent a year since 1984.

In 1988, Pinochet lost a referendum to extend his rule and was forced to call an election. He lost to Patricio Alywin, whose center-left coalition has ruled Chile since 1990. *AP*

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ROYAL BRUNEI

Bishop urges AFP soldiers ...

From page A1

Msgr. Pedro Quitorio, CBCP spokesperson, said the rally was reset because the grandstand would be used by the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. on Dec. 15.

Quitorio said simultaneous prayer rallies would proceed on Dec. 15 as originally scheduled in the 85 other dioceses outside of the Archdiocese of Manila, the country's premier see.

Instead of holding rallies, the Catholic Church in Cebu City will hold indoor discussions on Charter change (Cha-cha).

The Presbyteral Council of Cebu archdiocese headed by Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal came up with this decision during a meeting held yesterday.

The council said it was supporting the CBCP's call for widespread discussions and people's participation before Cha-cha could be undertaken.

Cha-cha trough Con-con

In a resolution signed by Vidal, the council said the discussion should focus on "no to Con-ass, no to postponement of elections, no to martial law or yes to Cha-cha through Con-con (constitutional convention)."

"That means, we will not gather in the streets but, instead, inside the churches, talk about the issue during the Masses. Each priest will say something. And then outside the Masses, there will be meetings within the church organizations and (they will) discuss the issue," Msgr. Achilles Dakay said.

A group of lawyers could not wait for the rallies on Dec. 17 and took action yesterday against Con-ass.

Eluding security personnel, the lawyers held a picket inside the Batasan complex in Quezon City where the House is located and called on House leaders to end their "political adventurism" by withdrawing the resolution seeking Congress to convene into constituent assembly starting today.

More than 30 members of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, the Ateneo-based Alternative Law Groups (ALG) and the Counsels for the Defense of Liberties staged the picket near the flagpole outside the House plenary hall.

"The move to change the Constitution through their so-called constituent assembly is nothing more than a tyranny of the House majority," said ALG convenor Marlon Manuel.

Vigil, noise barrage

Other protest actions were staged yesterday elsewhere.

Some 200 members of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan-Southern Tagalog massed in Calamba City in Laguna to join the vigil of other protesters in front of the Batasang Pambansa.

Others gathered in Sta. Cruz in Laguna, Lipa and Batangas cities in Batangas, and Dasmariñas in Cavite for demonstrations and a noise barrage. Some of their placards had images of pigs and bore the names of some pro-Charter change lawmakers.

In his homily, Tobias urged the people to join actions like those spearheaded by the CBCP "because only through this that we will be able to do something right for our country and perhaps, we would cast fear among our leaders."

"What we are doing is part of our being Christians. It is now that our people are counting on us," he said.

At a press conference after the Mass, Tobias said he was expecting the military to express support for the mass actions against efforts to revise the 1987 Constitution.

"Today, the Constitution is being ravaged (by) the interest of private individuals," he told reporters. "I ask them [soldiers] to help the people."

Sanctuary to a fugitive

Told that he might face a lawsuit from the Arroyo administration, a primary target of his criticisms since last year, Tobias replied: "It's OK. It's for the country."

Tobias earlier courted a government investigation following his admission that he had provided sanctuary to a fugitive, anti-Arroyo soldier in his home in Quezon City.

Quitorio said the CBCP-led prayer rally would proceed despite recent developments that appeared to show that the administration was backtracking on its plan to convene the House of Representatives into a constituent assembly (Con-ass) without the participation of the Senate.

Amid the threat of mass actions from the Church and business groups, Speaker Jose de Venecia on Saturday announced that the majority bloc in the House was putting the Con-ass on hold and was giving the Senate 72 hours from Monday to pass a resolution calling for a Con-con.

Quitorio said the CBCP would not fall for De Venecia's gambit, which urged the Catholic Church to exert pressure on senators.

"Our position is clear: We don't need Cha-cha," he told the INQUIRER. "But if it can't be avoided, it should be done through a constitutional convention. De Venecia is now dangling Con-con, but our feeling is that now is not the time."

"We have far more pressing problems and our people, especially those in Bicol, are suffering. Cha-cha is not the answer," he added.

Quitorio said the task of amending the Constitution should fall on a set of leaders enjoying public trust. He said the Arroyo administration seemed deaf to surveys showing its poor trust rating.

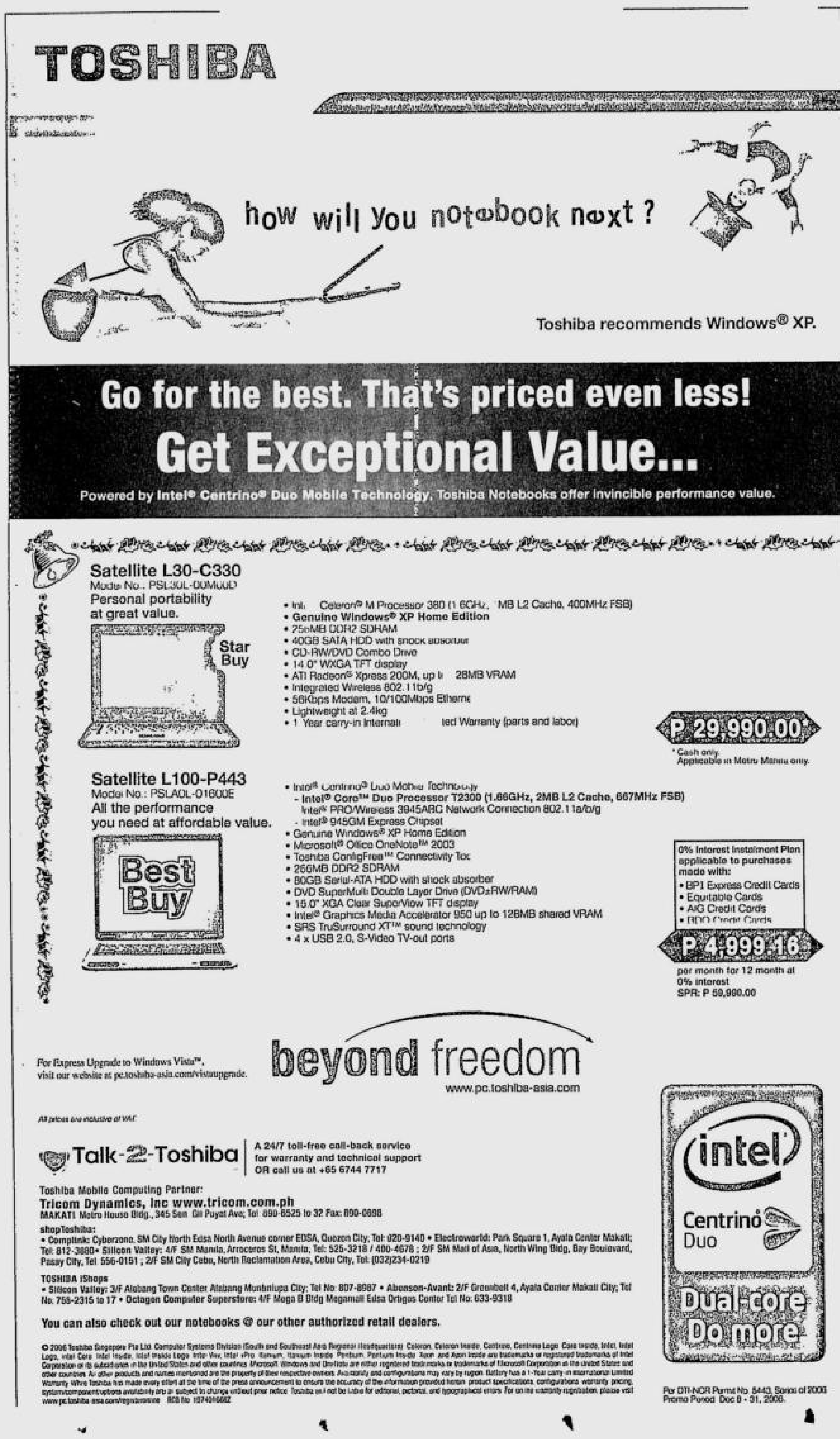
DOJ warns state employees

To discourage government employees from joining protest rallies, the Department of Justice yesterday issued a memorandum warning them that they can be administratively charged for taking to the streets.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez reminded government personnel of a recent Supreme Court decision saying that government personnel cannot hold "prohibited concerted mass action."

The high court said the right to strike was not absolute.

"All government employees of all government department and agencies are prohibited from joining mass actions, rallies, protests, strikes and other activities against the government and duly constituted authority," Gonzalez said. *With reports from Armand N. Nocum in Manila and Niña Catherine Calleja, Inquirer Southern Luzon*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References:
[1] Uterine Cancer in: Harrison's Internal Medicine 2006, accessed online at http://www.accessmedicine.com
[2] Pagliusi S. WHO-Vaccine Research and Development. Downloaded from http://www.who.int/vaccines/en/hpvrd.shtml
[3] Laudico A, Esteban D, Redaniel T et al. Philippine Cancer Facts and Estimates 2005. Publication by the Philippine Cancer Society, Inc.

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GMA allies retreat, shelve Con-ass plan

From page A1

Nograles' subsequent motion left open the possibility that Con-ass was alive, ostensibly as a face-saving move. He said the scheduled opening today of Con-ass had been put off to allow the House members to deliberate on Con-con.

Nograles said the move was meant to accommodate "sentiments of the various sectors of society."

Makati Rep. Teodoro Locsin said Con-ass was "dead" and would be "buried" on Friday during a rally at Rizal Park called by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines to be joined by other organizations.

Administration Sen. Ralph Recto said the House leadership should first get Ms Arroyo to certify as urgent bills calling for a Con-con.

"Without the signature of the President on an official document saying that she wants the Con-con bill passed immediately, then all claims to the contrary are not true," Recto said.

Live up to challenge

Nograles called on the CBCP to urge the Senate to join the House majority in supporting Con-con.

"They should live up to the challenge of reforming the Constitution," he said. He stressed that the House had already acceded to the Senate's wish to abandon Con-ass in favor of Con-con.

The CBCP has called for the Rizal Park rally to protest the House move to ram through amendments to the Constitution. Last week, the House discarded a rule that the usual bicameral procedure in approving bills be followed in introducing amendments to the Charter.

The CBCP initiative has been joined by the Iglesia ni Cristo, Bro. Mike Velarde of El Shaddai, Protestant Bishop Benny Abante and several Metro Manila mayors, among other anti-Charter change quarters.

The Con-ass plan has also been opposed by business groups, unions and organizations, representing professionals, farmers, women and the youth.

"I am not using the word challenge but the Senate should move expeditiously, based on their own public statement for the last two years, that they seek and prefer a constitutional convention," De Venecia said.

72 hours not difficult

"And it's not difficult for them to approve it in 72 hours, 48 hours, (or) the soonest possible opportunity for this idea came from them in the first place," he said, explaining that he had "no right to issue an ultimatum."

De Venecia noted that the Congress would take a Christmas break on Dec. 22, along with the House. "So we really have to move decisively but carefully and with great sensitivity to the requirements of public opinion, of our people," he added.

Nueva Ecija Rep. Aurelio Umali also told reporters that the plan to convene a Con-ass was officially dead but the majority was just discussing how to shift to Con-con.

"We want to follow the legal procedure—either to reconsider the Con-ass resolution, archive it, or convert the entire chamber into a committee of the whole to craft a new resolution calling for Con-con," said Umali.

Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr. said the Senate could easily pass a Con-ass resolution since it would only set the date for elections, not introduce amendments to the Constitution.

House-Senate meet

The President's political adviser, Gabriel Claudio, said Malacañang was looking at the possibility of bringing together leaders of the Senate and the House for a meeting by this week in fresh efforts to amend the Constitution via Con-con.

"We can facilitate interaction among the leaders of both chambers," he said.

Claudio had earlier said the Palace was backing De Venecia's call for senators to join the House in pushing for Charter change through Con-con and called for sectors supporting constitutional reforms to rally behind the Con-con mode.

In a phone interview, he said since the door had been opened for a Con-con, there was now a need to "maximize efforts to avert any further divisiveness and acrimony."

He said a Con-con could be a "unifying force" as he reiterated that many sectors including the Church, the Senate and other religious groups preferred to go the Con-con mode in pursuing Charter change.

"We're anxious to find out from the senators their initial reaction to the proposal (of De Venecia) and their findings following (yesterday's Senate) hearings (on the House bid to amend the Constitution via the constituent assembly)," he said. *With reports from Christine O. Avendaño, TJ Burgonio and Philip C. Tubeza*

Not the time to Cha-cha, legal experts tell Senate

From page A1

calmness and the sobriety needed for such serious business," he added.

Bernas said that "Constitution-making is a very serious thing; so it has to be approached in a very deliberate manner, very calm manner, not in the context of intense turmoil, which we are undergoing now."

He said the behavior of the administration lawmakers last week served as the best argument against a unicameral parliamentary system. "That is, I think, the mirror of what could happen if we were to approve the move to parliamentary now."

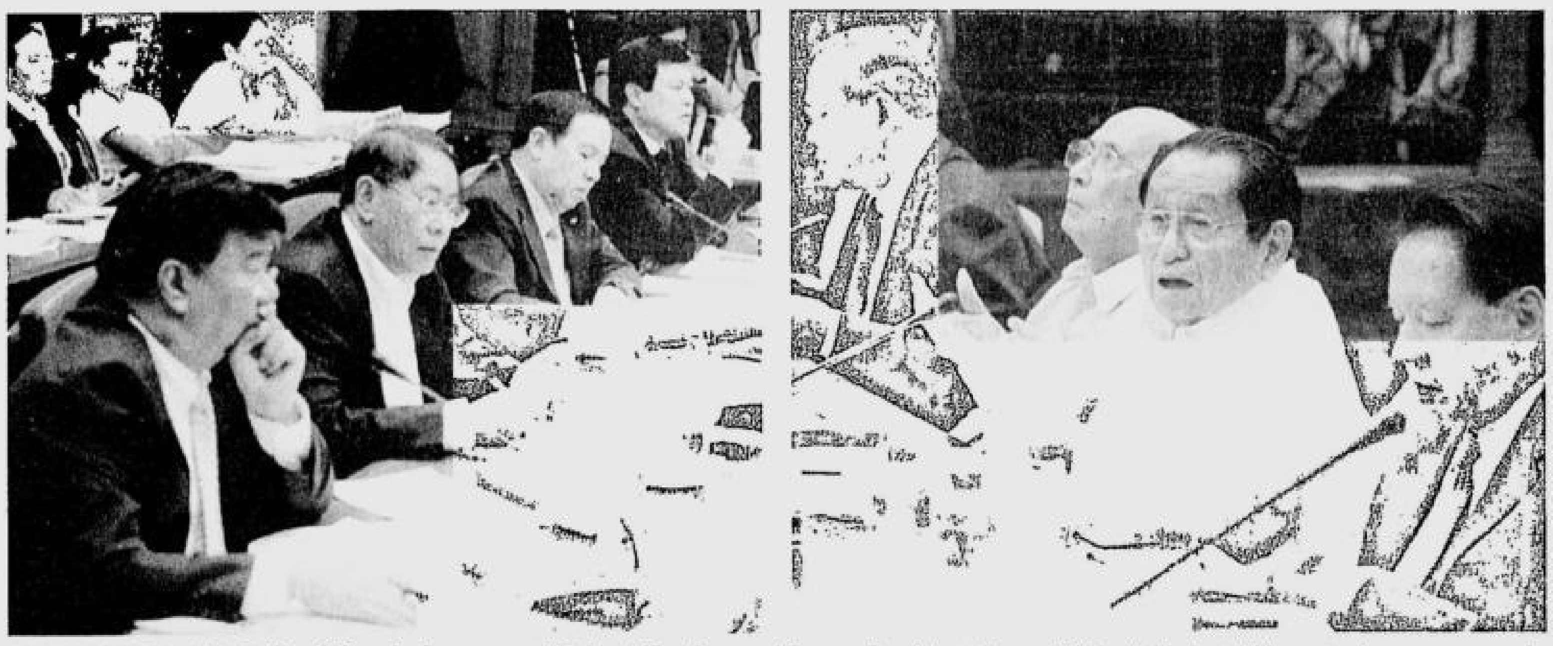
Yesterday's nationally televised hearing, which tackled Senate resolutions calling for a constitutional convention and House Joint Resolution No. 26 calling on Congress to convene into a constituent assembly, came two days after De Venecia softened on the House push for Con-ass and floated the idea of Con-con to amend the Charter.

The senators agreed in a caucus last week to resume the hearings after members of the House majority scrambled to pass a resolution convening Congress into Con-ass and set the Con-ass for tomorrow.

Outside the Senate hearing, however, a congressman slammed the upper chamber for weaseling out on its bluff when it was called.

"The Senate is running scared, that's why they're holding this public hearing, inviting basically everyone that agrees with them," said Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr., pointing out that the challenge to convene a Con-con came from senators themselves.

"As you can see from the nature of questions, Sen. Ralph Recto is talking about the Malolos Constitution? Is that how the Senate is going to debate Charter change? No wonder these guys [in the House] are railroading it," Locsin said.



SENATORS Franklin Drilon, Edgardo Angara and Richard Gordon, and Senate President Manuel Villar (left photo) listen to the comments of legal experts (right photo), retired Supreme Court Associate Justice Vicente Mendoza, Fr. Joaquin Bernas, S.J., former Cebu Gov. Pablo Garcia and former Sen. John Osmeña, during a hearing on the issue of Charter change.

ROGER MARGALLO

Sen. Richard Gordon, chair of the Senate committee on constitutional amendments, said at the outset that yesterday's hearing was conducted in the normal course of looking into proposals to amend the Charter.

Referendum

Gordon suggested that the hearing had nothing to do with Speaker Jose de Venecia's plea that the Senate act within 72 hours from Monday to initiate a move to convene a Con-con, as it has always insisted on, after the House effort to revise the Charter through a Con-ass provoked an intense public outrage.

Bernas said the senators should decide whether to agree to a Con-con, and if they felt strongly about it, set a referendum on whether the people should agree to Charter change through this mode or Con-ass, say in next year's midterm elections.

"The best way to address this is, let's ask the people whether they want a constitutional convention. Let's ask the people in the May 2007 elections, whether they want it," he said, a view echoed by Mendoza.

"If I were in the Senate, I would say no [to Con-con] at this stage. I won't even ask the people now," he added. "Probably after the elections in 2007, and when we have elections in 2010, then we might ask the question again. We need time to calm down, settle our differences, to become less combative with each other."

A referendum, Bernas stressed, should be preceded by an extensive information campaign about the "force of Con-con."

"Nobody should tell it when it should end, nobody should tell it what it should not do and should do."

If he were to take into consideration the timeline that Charter change must be undertaken now, Mendoza said convening a Con-con was more feasible than assembling Con-ass.

Revamp Comelec

Unlike in a Con-ass, it was easier to reach a consensus among members of Congress on the need to call for a Con-con, where the merits of proposed amendments would be deliberated on by "specially elected delegates," he said.

OneVoice convenor Christian Monsod proposed that for the Con-con to be "meaningful," the Commission on Elections should be revamped, except for the newly appointed commissioners, and a law ensuring the broad representation of all sectors in such a body should be passed.

"An election of delegates who are elected under an electoral process that is suspect to manipulation is not a credible basis to convene a body that would review our fundamental law," said Monsod.

The former Comelec chair said any referendum on Con-con should be held after the May 2007 elections and the people had determined whether the political exercise was credible.

"Any referendum should be after the May 2007 elections if the people are satisfied that the electoral system is trustworthy," he said. "Time must be taken to inform the people what the issues are. That's why it should not be rushed either."

OneVoice is a multisectoral group formed in the midst of the political turmoil last year sparked by the "Hello Garci" scandal that nearly unseated Ms Arroyo over allegations she rigged the 2004 presidential election. Cha-cha then was seriously pursued as a graceful way out for Ms Arroyo, whose allies in the House squelched two moves over the past year to impeach her.

Attempt to derail protests

Monsod said OneVoice believed the House-proposed Con-con was designed "to derail the growing protest against its machinations and to give the Con-ass exercise a second life."

"Let the House rebuild its own credibility by channeling its passion for a hasty Cha-cha into a more urgent action of electoral reforms through a total revamp of the Commission on Elections to pave the way for credible elections in 2006, and for any future referendum or plebiscites," he said.

The Management Association of the Philippines, in a statement, also weighed in on the issue. "The Constitution is too important a document to be rushed, or to be written to suit current limited agenda." *With a report from Jerome Aning*

Nontoxic toys top group's Yuletide gifts

From page A1

would buy for kids to ensure that they do not give gifts with harmful chemicals like lead and polyvinyl chloride.

Ecowaste Coalition, a network of some 50 local organizations, also warned against buying toys with sharp edges, excessively loud sounds without volume controls and long strings that could get entangled around the child because these could cause more injury than joy.

"Consumers need to be exceptionally careful when buying toy gifts for Christmas. Toys should be free from any physical and chemical hazards, so as not to endanger the health and safety of our children," Ecowaste convener Rei Panaligan said in a statement.

Look out for No. 3 label

The coalition, which is pushing for the use of alternatives to plastic, said children may ingest phthalates (pronounced "tha-lates"), a group of chemical compounds that is used to turn polyvinyl chloride (PVC) from a hard plastic into a flexible one. Phthalates and PVC are known to cause cancer and kidney damage, and affect hormonal and reproductive development in children.

Ecowaste said toy buyers should look for the No. 3 label on all plastic toys, which indicates that the toy was made with PVC plastic and should be avoided.

"Safer toys exist, so why expose your child to toxics?" Ecowaste said.

More than 202,300 toy-related injuries were recorded in emergency rooms in the United States last year, Ecowaste said, citing data from the US Consumer Product Safety Commission.

At least 20 deaths among children aged 15 months to 13 years were also reported, with nine of the casualties dying due to choking. Others drowned, were struck, strangled, asphyxiated, or electrocuted while playing with the unfriendly toys.

Eco-friendly tips

Some of the eco-friendly Christmas tips issued by Ecowaste yesterday included:

- Choose toys that match the age, interest, aptitude and skill of the intended recipient, avoiding inappropriate toys that may pose safety risks to younger children.
- Check the warning labels and instructions, particularly the age and safety recommendations, which should be clear to the parents, and when suitable, to the children.
- Avoid toys with small or loose parts that could easily fall out and be swallowed. Look for sturdy toys made of nonbreakable materials.
- Keep toys' plastic wrappings, foam peanuts or paper strips away from children to avoid choking or aspiration.

Warning label

Senate President Manuel Villar has filed a bill called "Toy Safety Labeling Act," which seeks to make mandatory the placement of warning label that specifies the materials used in manufacturing the toys and indicates whether these are "toxic, corrosive, irritant, flammable, or combustible."

"Toy makers and dealers should clean up their act and only offer toys that will not result in unreasonable risks of injury or death for young users," Panaligan said.

He urged parents to file complaints on dangerous toys through the Department of Trade and Industry's consumer hotline 751-3330. *Blanche S. Rivera*

'Old town' for posterity, says developer

From page A1

the physical culture, *hindi kwento lang* (not only through stories), use it for education, learn the past from this," Acuzar said.

Although his project may be viewed for its potential national impact or implications on cultural preservation and promotion, Acuzar said this has not been regulated or backed by the National Historical Institute or similar agencies.

Laws

The Local Government Code of 1991 lacks explicit provisions pertaining to heritage and only a few local governments are known to protect local heritage through ordinances. However, several laws exist to identify cultural heritage and property.

The Civil Code of the Philippines' Article 415 defines built or immovable property while Republic Act No. 4846 (Cultural Properties Preservation and Protection Act) defines cultural property, which include old buildings.

Mayor Armando Ramos said the municipal government has declared Acuzar's property a tourism site.

Acuzar works with a team of architects, researchers, consultants, art dealers, historians, carpenters and craftsmen. He declined to name all the members of his team, which he calls "*grupo ng magluluma* (junk hunters)."

He was also silent about the cost of his project.

He said he got the concept during foreign trips, especially in Scandinavia, where the culture is preserved in structures.

Not on NHI list

To him, the *bahay na bato* (stone houses) reflect the best of Philippine architectural heritage, which explains why he has acquired several of these.

Acuzar said he had broken no laws.

None of the structures standing now at the pueblo is in the list of properties or landmarks declared historical by the National Historical Institute.

But two structures, which he did not want to name, are historically important even as these are not on the NHI list.

No government or private group was known to have undertaken an evaluation of the relocation, restoration and preservation processes and techniques used by Acuzar's team.

Negotiations

The chief architect, Joel Rico, said the team had developed an acceptable system, one that strives for authenticity.

"As is" was Acuzar's plain term for that rule.

Acuzar said he had left it to his agents to deal with the owners of the structures. When the purchase is done after research, he said he sent out word to the families to promise no alterations and to guarantee them access to the houses in the new site.

He said he consulted local officials, but that had not been the case though with the 145-year-old Catholic chapel in the village of Pio in Porac, Pampanga, some 60 kilometers from Bagac. The villagers have vowed to protect the chapel from antique dealers and demolition crew.

Ivan Henares, a Pampanga historian and trustee of the Heritage Conservation Society, said the houses might not be safe in Acuzar's property.

For one, the Mount Natib area sits on a fault zone, which was why the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant that is near the property was mothballed. For another, saltwater can undermine the integrity of the houses and other materials.

Rico said old houses were much more earthquake-resistant. There should be no worry for saltwater because, he said, a new technology is used to deal with that. He gave no details.

Not foe

Acuzar claimed having found allies among heritage conservationists.

"*Tama naman na i*-maintain *sa* community *pero hindi kayang i*-maintain *ng gobyerno o ng mga nagmana. Kaya naisip ko na pagsama-samahin* (I agree that it is correct to maintain the structures right in the communities, but neither the government nor the heirs have the funds to maintain those. So I decided to gather them here)," said Acuzar.

Owners of ancestral houses are tempted to sell lots, especially those in commercial areas because there is no law compensating opportunity losses, he said. The trend also is that most of the heirs have left for abroad, neglecting the houses.

But Acuzar said he would not be selfish at all.

"I could give this to the government when it finds value for this a heritage site. *Parang* art, *dino*-donate (It's like art, you can donate it)," he said.

The problem, said Rico, is that most of the heritage laws in the Philippines only ensure protection, not funding.

At the same time, there is yet no group of heritage building owners, quite like Britain's Historic Houses Association, who guard the properties while they earn through tourism and commercial activities.

Senate to GMA: Forget Cha-cha, let's pass '07 budget

By TJ Burgonio and Philip C. Tubeza

SENATE LEADERS YESTERDAY ASKED President Macapagal-Arroyo and Speaker Jose de Venecia to drop their vigorous push for Charter change and focus instead on getting the proposed P1.126-trillion 2007 national budget passed.

Senate President Manuel Villar Jr. and Sen. Franklin Drilon said the President should urge House members to constitute their panel in the bicameral conference committee so that both chambers of Congress could deliberate on and pass the budget measure possibly before Congress adjourns on Dec. 22.

Both chambers hadn't convened the committee because the House had yet to constitute its panel.

"I think they're just busy with Cha-cha, that's why they aren't giving much attention to the important legislation. It's a pity because we approved our version early. I think the President should step in now and convince the congressmen to work on the passage of the budget," Villar said.

Both chambers have less than two weeks to constitute the bicameral conference, and "as each day passes without this getting convened, the probability of the budget getting passed before yearend further dims," Villar said in a briefing.

The Senate passed its version of the budget, which was P8.4 billion less than that approved by the House, on Dec. 4. Two days later, Senate Secretary Oscar Yabes informed De Venecia of the need to convene the bicameral conference committee.

Drilon, head of the Senate bicam panel and chair of the finance committee, said it was about time the President, De Venecia and the administration congressmen put the Charter change controversy "behind us" and focused on the passage of the budget measure.

"I think it's time for us to move forward, put all of these incidents which have caused us political instability behind us," he said. "No one can deny that this Cha-cha controversy has clearly divided the Filipino people and has caused too much political instability and tension in the country that is affecting the economy in a negative way."

The proposed 2007 budget will not be sidetracked by the Cha-cha debates in the House, chamber leaders said yesterday.

House Deputy Majority Leader Antonio Cerilles and Antique Rep. Exequiel Javier, chair of the committee on economic affairs, said the House will give utmost priority to the bicameral report on the proposed 2007 General Appropriations Act to ensure its ratification before the Christmas break.

They said the House and the Cha-cha debates should not be made the "scapegoats" if the passage of the budget were delayed.

The lawmakers said it was the Senate that had a dismal record in failing to pass the budget each of the past two years. Cerilles and Javier said the House "knew its priorities" and its members will not allow Cha-cha to divert their attention away from the budget and other vital measures.

Cerilles said the House could take less than an hour for the plenary to form the House panel for the bicameral conference.

"The bicameral body can finish its work in a week because there are no major problem areas in both chambers' versions," the Zamboanga lawmaker said.

On the part of the House, Cerilles said it passed on third and final reading the proposed P1.126 trillion budget for next year on Oct. 13, giving the senators enough time to go over this.

"House members know their responsibility on the budget and we see no reason why its enactment will be delayed," he said.

"Cha-cha is a not an issue against the budget enactment," he said.

Javier said the Cha-cha issue had "been overused to put the House in a bad light."

"For all we know, the Senate wants to hostage the budget to totally frustrate the Cha-cha effort," Javier said.

"To say that the House and Cha-cha might delay the budget passage is totally unfair and unfounded," he said.

'Better to give than to receive,' year-round, gov't workers told

By Leila B. Salaverria

THE OLD ADAGE, "It's better to give than to receive," holds true—particularly this Christmas and especially among government employees who could otherwise lose their jobs.

Civil Service Commission Chair Karina Constantino David yesterday warned government workers against soliciting gifts and favors not only this Christmas, but all year round, especially from suppliers, contractors and clients.

David said soliciting gifts was a violation of the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees, which states that "soliciting or accepting gifts or anything of monetary value in the course of official duties" is ground for administrative disciplinary action.

It is also considered a grave offense punishable by dismissal on the first offense, based on the Uniform Rules on Administrative Cases in the Civil Service.

David, in a statement, said that determining the propriety of accepting a gift depended on the item's value, any possible conflict of interest, the relationship between the donor and the receiver, and the reason for the gift.

Unsolicited gifts or donations of nominal or insignificant value were generally acceptable, she said. But, she added, the frequency of the gift-giving and the expectation of returns arising from this should be taken into account by the recipient.

The Kris Kringle tradition, however, of exchanging inexpensive presents between officemates in government offices was acceptable, according to the CSC.

There was also no prohibition on government employees receiving personal gifts from family members and relatives on special occasions like birthdays, or from persons with no regular, pending or expected transactions with the government.

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September 22, 2006

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No. 29, s-2006

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SUBJECT : Amendment to PhilHealth Circular No. 10, s-2005 regarding clarifications on the eligibility of Individually Paying Members and their dependents to PhilHealth coverage

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For information and guidance of all concerned.

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Globe and OWWA honor Model OFW Families

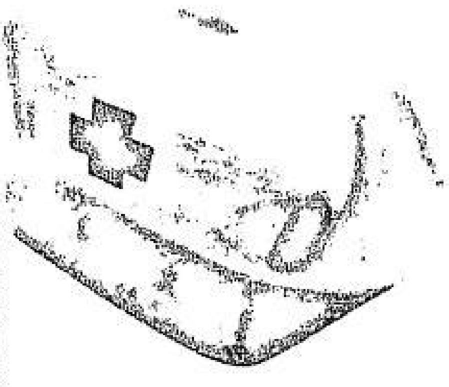
***An overachieving nurse from Batangas and her engineer husband, a dockworker from Bacolod** who wouldn't be denied a college education, and **an engineer from Jolo** who was an OFW long before the term was coined were this year's principal honorees at the Model OFW Family of the Year Awards (MOFYA).*

*They each won a **Camella house and lot**, a **Globe Autoload Max retailership** and a **trophy**, among other prizes, from the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and Globe, major supporter of the event.*

Nominees had to meet strict criteria: at least four years of OFW experience for the head of the family; a college degree for at least one child in the family; a solid reputation in the community; and good management of overseas earnings with sustained income from investments or any legitimate entrepreneurial activity. After a daunting screening procedure, seventeen regional winners were chosen and out of them, three families emerged as the Model OFW Families of the Year.

From OFW nurse to outstanding civil servant

In 1978, way before the recent boom in overseas demand for nurses, **Myrna Sevilla Punay** was a well respected member of the staff at the Riyadh Al Kharj Hospital in Saudi Arabia. She had gone abroad to support her family's finances and to help with her paraplegic father's medication.



In 1980, she married Mario Punay who also worked in Riyadh as a civil engineer in the Ministry of Water and Agriculture. They were blessed with four children, twin girls Maria Jamilla and Maria Carmina, another girl, Maria Lyn and a son, Marion Joseph. All graduates from the top universities in the country except for the youngest who is still taking up Architecture at the Far Eastern University.

Myrna Punay came back to the Philippines for good in 1986 and is now busy with public service, socio-civic and church organizations. She's been a Director of the Rosario Water District, a member of Municipal Health Board, and an adviser of Municipal Council in Batangas. She's served as the president of the Mother Butlers, Catholic Women's League and Inner Wheel Club of the Philippines. In 2004, she was also recognized as *One of the Ten Most Outstanding Women in Batangas.*

Her husband Mario now manages their construction and hardware business as well as their accumulated properties in Parañaque, Pasig, Pangasinan, Lipa, and in Rosario Batangas.

From ship electrician to successful businessman

Melchor Ca-ayon was born to a simple family in Bacolod. His parents had no permanent employment and were sustaining their family by making "puto". As a young boy, Melchor took part in the small family business, helping sell the native rice cakes.

Melchor started to work at the Banago port in Bacolod as a "kargador" in order to supplement the money he earned from selling rice cakes. He earned a college degree in Technical Electricity at the Negros Occidental College of Arts and Trades with the support of his parents and a scholarship from the Filipinas Foundation Inc.

He then worked as a freelance electrician in Manila while applying for jobs abroad through various placement agencies. During this time, he met and fell in love with Lillian, an employee of St. Scholastica's Academy.

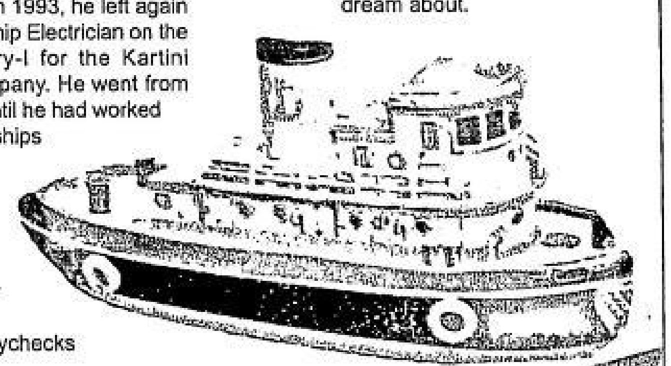
Like countless Filipinos before him, Melchor realized that his dreams could only be achieved by working abroad. He made the rounds of placement agencies and it got to a point where he'd used up all his savings on placement fees. The whole family had no choice but to move in to the garage of his wife's employer just to make ends meet. Swallowing his pride, he went back to Bacolod to borrow money from friends for placement fees.

1991 was the year his life would change for the better. AGAP Arabia Limited took him on as an Industrial Electrician. After a brief homecoming in 1993, he left again to work as a Ship Electrician on the M/V Discovery-I for the Kartini Shipping Company. He went from ship to ship, until he had worked almost all the ships of the line.

All throughout his years overseas, Melchor never forgot to help others. His paychecks were always split two ways. Half was for his own family, and the other half given to brothers, sisters and a niece for their education.

Through his savings from his earnings, Melchor and his wife were able to start various businesses such as a sari-sari store, a stall at the Burgos public market in Bacolod, pedicabs, and recently a fleet of taxis.

As a result of his labors abroad, Melchor's children have received the kind of education most parents dream about.



From pioneer OFW engineer to community leader

Kagim Halim Jajurie was born in Jolo, Sulu to a prominent family. He graduated with a Civil Engineering degree from the Mapua Institute of Technology and later earned a postgraduate degree from the SEATO Graduate School of Engineering.

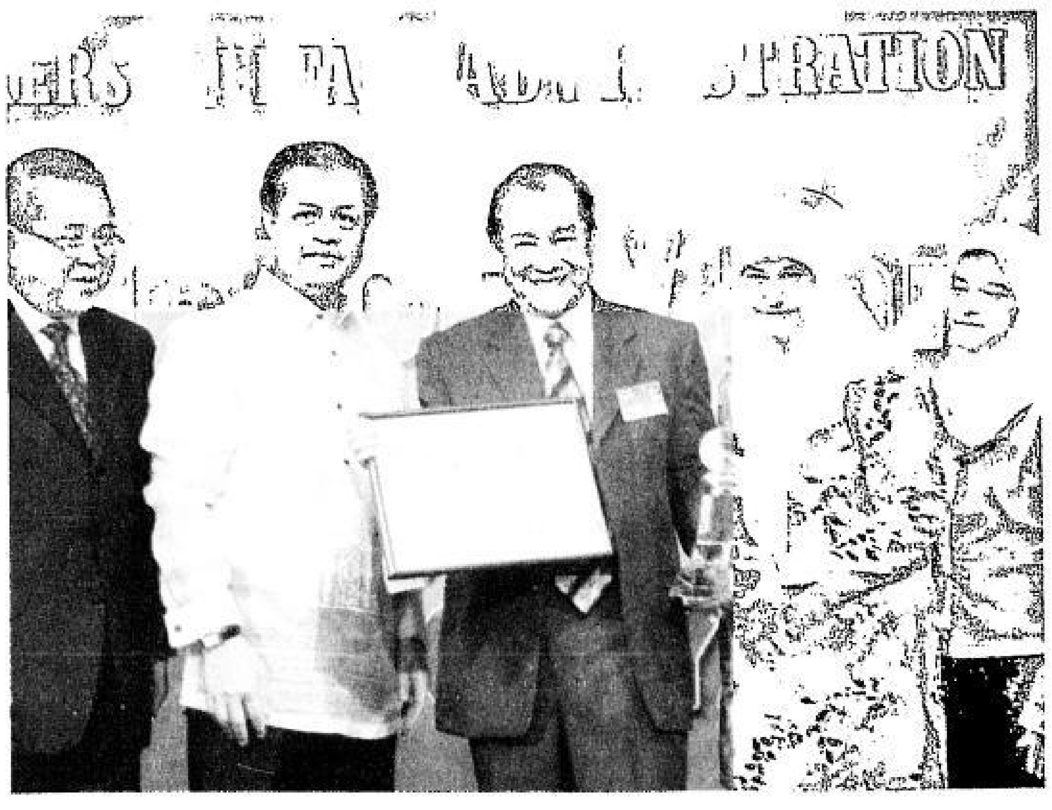
In 1964, long before the term OFW was coined and a Philippine embassy was even established, Kagim accepted a job offer to work in Saudi Arabia as one of the few pioneer overseas workers. He started out as a Highway Designer for Wilson-Murrow Inc. and then moved on to work at the Ministry of Communications of the Saudi Government as a Design Engineer.

For over 30 years, he was part of the design and construction of over 50,000 kilometers of highways and bridges all over the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Of all his build sites, his most memorable was the network of roads in the Holy City of Makkah, Mudzdalifa and Mina. This amazing network of roads and bridges facilitated the movement of over three million pilgrims during the Hajj period and aided in the development of the local townships.

In 1996, after the finalization of the Peace Agreement, which he also helped negotiate, he came back to the Philippines and was appointed ARMM-DPWH Regional Secretary. At the same time, he was also made Executive Director of the Salam Peace Project and Project Director of the Tulay ng Pangulo sa Mindanao (SZOPAD Project). Remarkably, for the relatively short duration of the SZOPAD Project of only three years and four months, he was able to build 526 bridges of various specifications all over the ARMM.

33 years of overseas employment have given Kagim and his family a good life. They now own a dream country home, rest houses, rice fields, a commercial apartment building and a condominium unit in Manila.

Just as important, Kagim was able to make solid investments in the future of his children. His two eldest children graduated at the American University in Cairo. His third child, is now involved in public service as the Municipal Councilor in Titay, Zamboanga. The youngest daughter is now an OFW working in the place where Kagim found the means to make his dreams come true - Saudi Arabia.



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Region II	Dayag, Eugenio P. and Family
Region III	Trinidad, Antonio L. and Family
Region IV-B	Dino, Fortunato A. and Family
Region V	Ala, Edwin D. and Family
Region VII	Sandalo, Oliver A. and Family
Region VIII	Marquez, Teresito C. and Family
Region X	Doromal, Glen dC. and Family
Region XI	Balan, Jose T. Jr. and Family
Region XII	Tabasa, Benjamin A. and Family
ARMM	Langkuno, Abdulkarim T. and Family
CARAGA	Jayoma, Salvador B. and Family

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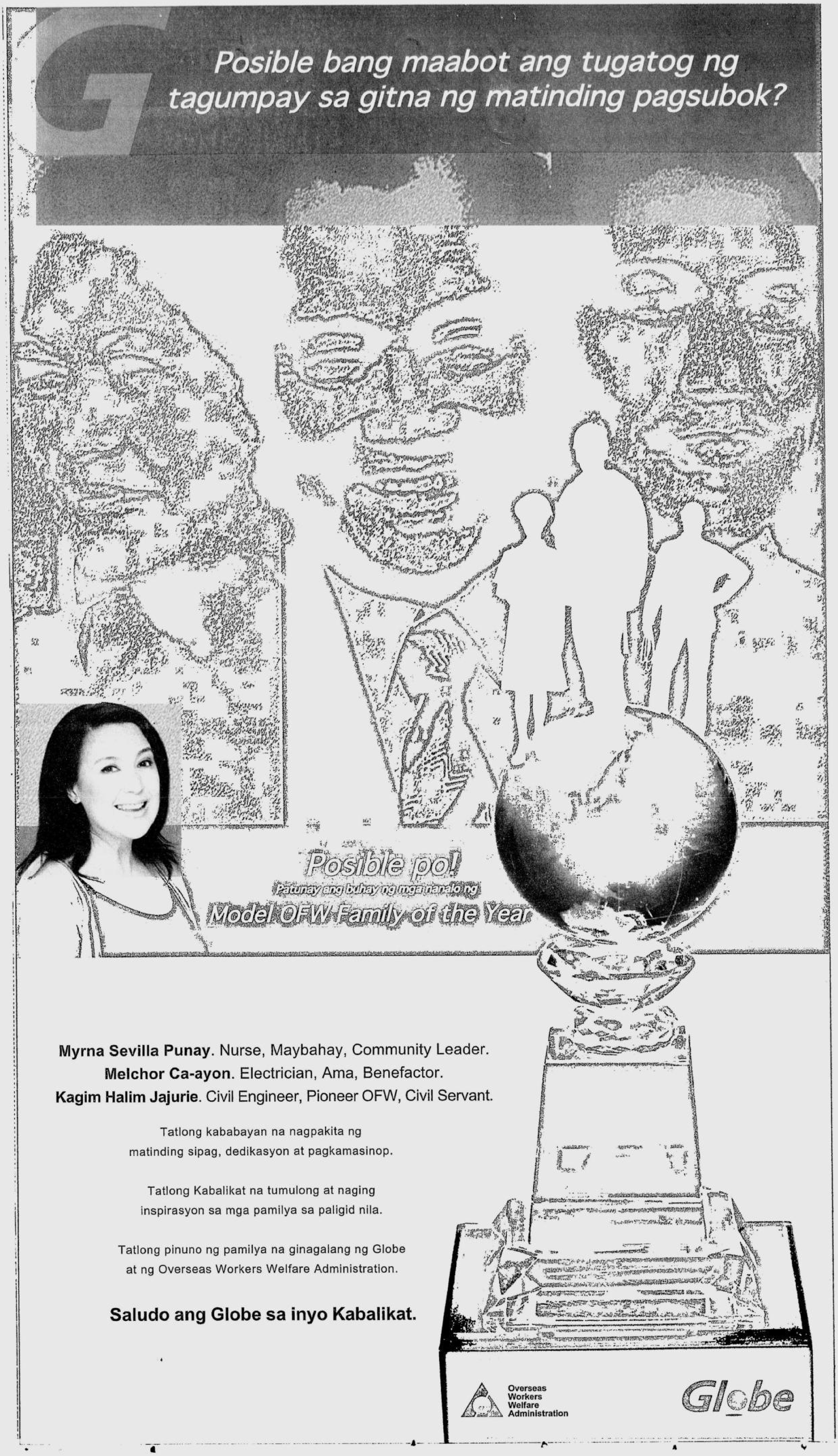

Posible bang maabot ang tugatog ng tagumpay sa gitna ng matinding pagsubok?

Posible po!

Patunay ang buhay ng mga nanalo ng

Model OFW Family of the Year

Myrna Sevilla Punay. Nurse, Maybahay, Community Leader.
Melchor Ca-ayon. Electrician, Ama, Benefactor.
Kagim Halim Jajurie. Civil Engineer, Pioneer OFW, Civil Servant.

Tatlong kababayan na nagpakita ng
matinding sipag, dedikasyon at pagkamasinop.

Tatlong Kabalikat na tumulong at naging
inspirasyon sa mga pamilya sa paligid nila.

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OPINION

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Giving

EDITORIAL

SUPERTYPHOON "REMING" WAS ONE OF THE most lethal and destructive storms to strike the Bicol region in recent years. It left more than 1,000 people dead, hundreds of others missing and hundreds more injured. Tens of thousands have fled to evacuation centers and right now, they have nowhere to go because their homes were either destroyed by the supertyphoon or swept away by the mudflow from Mayon Volcano.

One has to go to the scene of death and devastation to realize the magnitude of the human tragedy that the supertyphoon has caused. What compounded the suffering of the typhoon victims was the delay in the transportation and distribution of relief aid in the first two days after the disaster, the time when they most needed water, food, clothes, shelter and medicine.

But now, aid is being transported to the suffering thousands, and governmental and private agencies are working double time to give some relief to the victims. President Macapagal-Arroyo has declared a state of national calamity and authorized the release of P1 billion for relief and rehabilitation. Foreign governments and relief agencies have sent aid, and private institutions and corporations have also pitched in.

A massive relief and rehabilitation effort is needed in Bicol to get the lives of the tens of thousands of victims, including the displaced families, back to normal. It is said that "donor fatigue" has set in because of the series of disasters that have struck the country this year. We appeal to all kind-hearted people to continue giving what they can to help our suffering countrymen in the Bicol region as well as in Samar and Leyte which were hit over the weekend by typhoon "Seniang."

Christmas is a season of giving, and surely we can cut back on our parties and celebrations and give what we have saved to our less fortunate countrymen. This is one time when, as Christians and as human beings, we should remind ourselves that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Waiting

THE CALLOUS MAJORITY CONGRESSMEN, WHO spent two sleepless nights railroading the infamous Con-ass resolution while thousands went without water and food in the Bicol region, have apparently realized the futility of forcing the convening of a constituent assembly without the Senate.

The Arroyo administration, after failing to push through the government-initiated "public initiative," and now failing to get the constituent assembly going, has changed its tactic and is campaigning for a constitutional convention. But Speaker Jose de Venecia wants the Senate to announce its decision within 72 hours.

It is obvious why the House leadership is putting the pressure on the Senate: they want it to take the blame for the failure of Charter change to take off. But is there an urgent, crying need to amend the Constitution?

Yes, the Constitution has many flaws that could be improved through amendments. Yes, some proposed amendments may be worth studying. But in these critical times when several regions are reeling from the destructive effects of typhoons, should we rush such an important undertaking?

The proposal is to elect the delegates to the proposed constitutional convention in May, simultaneous with the election of senators and congressmen and local officials. The problem with this is that issues related to the Constitution may not be thoroughly discussed because issues related to lawmaking and local affairs will take precedence.

Also, the "discards" from the nominees for senators, congressmen and local officials can be expected to run for delegate to the constitutional convention. Thus, we will be perpetuating family dynasties and the same economic and political interests will prevail at the convention. A separate election for delegates to the convention should allow fresh faces and new blood to surface and their election could greatly improve the Constitution.

Let's wait for the passions stirred up by one of the most contentious elections in the nation's history to die down before we begin the process of convening a constitutional convention. The Constitution is too important a document for its revision to be undertaken without a long, unhurried deliberation and serious study.

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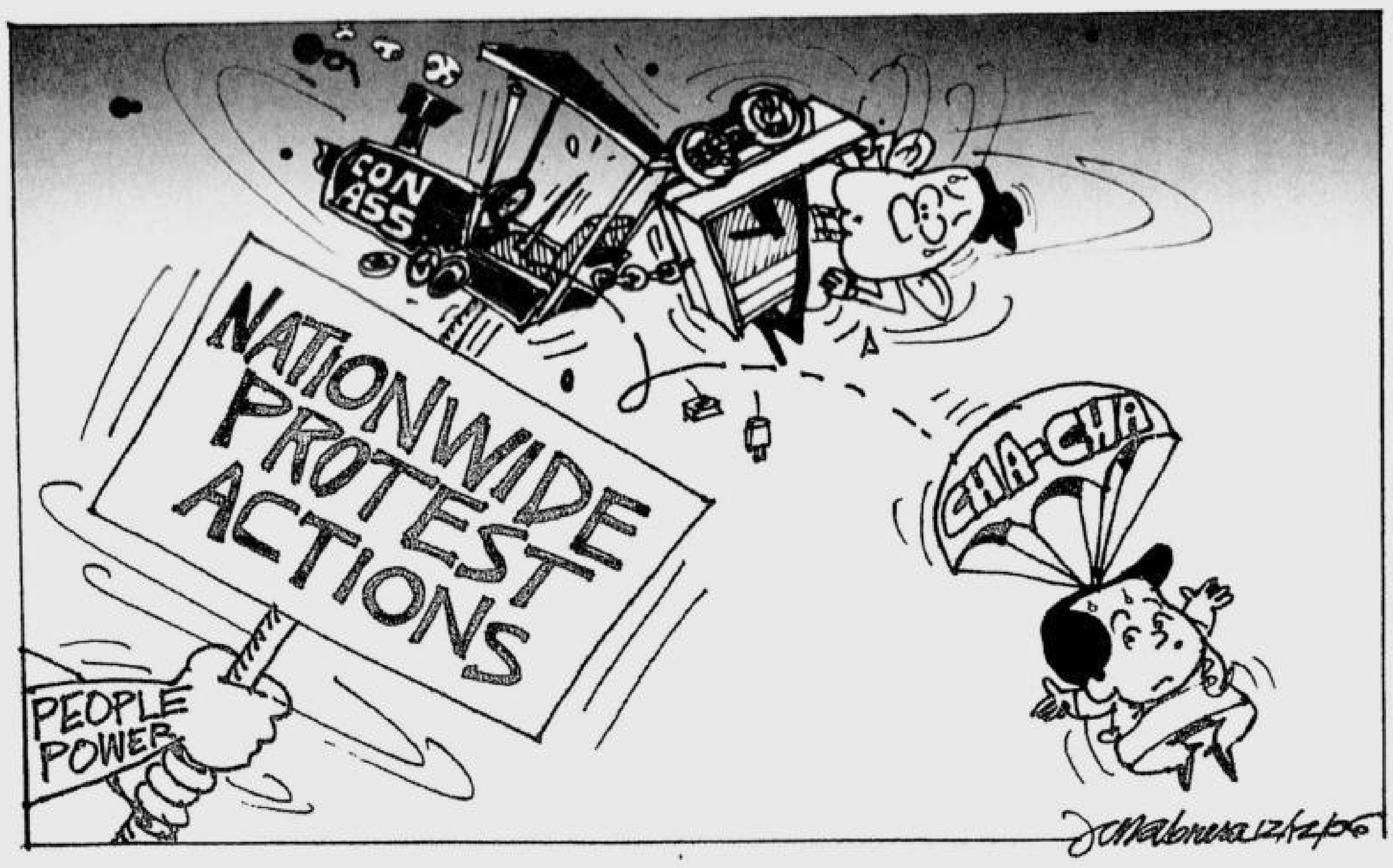

Santa's 'mothballs'

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

SO, WILL SANTA CLAUS SKIP TOWN TO avoid congressmen who've listed gifts they'd grab in a constitution-writing binge to start 12 days before Christmas?

That'd be tomorrow, Wednesday. By then, if the Senate doesn't heed the 72-hour ultimatum to call for a constitutional convention, the House of Representatives could very well withdraw its offer to scrap the Yuletide gift they packaged for themselves, Speaker Jose de Venecia said. Paced by notorious "Brat Pack" alumni, like Reps. Constantino Jaraula, Gilbert Teodoro and Juan Miguel Zubiri, House members would plunge ahead and, under their railroaded resolution, blue-pencil the Constitution on their own.

Depending on Senate action, the House majority members would also restore the most lavish present it gift-wrapped for themselves: canceling the May 2007 elections. It'd also insist on lifting caps on their terms of office. "There are no such restrictions in parliaments," Jaraula offered without blushing.

In both diplomacy and politics, an ultimatum is the last demand before collapsing on concessions. "One usually expects best wishes in December, not threats or ultimatums," Sen. Manuel Roxas II wryly noted. The drumbeat of altruistic rhetoric, meanwhile, continues. Only constitutional change can save the nation, the congressmen insist without blinking. Where avarice rules, "hypocrisy becomes good taste," George Bernard Shaw once said.

The House is therefore "prepared to call for a constitutional convention" where elected delegates would revise the Charter, the Speaker said. Two delegates per congressional district could be elected during next May's polls to save about P3 billion in expenses in uncharacteristic scrimping mode.

"Why should [this be considered] a defeat? We're trying to unite the nation," the Speaker argued.

"Retreats are possible when there is territory to retreat from," Leon Trotsky wrote in "Letters from Exile." But do the Speaker and his coterie have that elbow room? Apparently not. The administration does not have 195 no, not reindeers, but "warm bodies" for a con-ass, Sen. Joker Arroyo said. The Senate called that bluff.

Or is this a strained House version of their road to Damascus? If so, some of that badly-needed light is coming from the furious—and still building up—firestorm of protests over the House attempt to rig Charter change. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, El Shaddai, the Protestant mainstream National Council of Churches, Jesus is Lord Movement, Makati Business Club and civil society bluntly assail con-ass as grossly self-serving. Iglesia Ni Cristo representatives held a Palace meeting and suggested that the President "back off."

The Speaker and his allies will have to cool their heels, even after the "12th day of Christmas." The Senate finance committee, for example, raised the ante: It won't approve a plebiscite budget if the House tries to ram through their con-ass. "There will be no spending for an illegal referendum," the committee chairman, Sen. Franklin Drilon, vowed.

We expect the Commission on Elections to ride the Cha-cha train." Drilon predicted. "If the con-ass gets to the Comelec, the Senate will ask the Supreme Court to prevent the Comelec from setting the date of the plebiscite because what the House did and what they will do afterwards would be patently unconstitutional."

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, meanwhile, hurriedly tried to distance herself from the emerging House fiasco. Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita gave the latest zig to the Malacañang zag: it would "support any mode of Charter change that would bring about the political reforms the administration says it wants to achieve".

For his part, De Venecia tried to yank up the slipping fig leaf of independence, insisting representatives were acting independently. He denied that senior officials of the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, feeling the heat from enraged constituents, pressed the President to drop con-ass or face the likelihood of an outburst of people power.

No wonder the Speaker looks the worse for the wear. To paraphrase what the British writer Malcolm Muggeridge said of Prime Minister Harold MacMillan, De Venecia and his cohorts embody in their persons the national decay they supposed themselves to be confronting. They " exuded the smell of mothballs."

Congressmen and their principal backer and banker, President Arroyo, severely underestimated the gut revulsion that their raw self-seeking triggered. Until now, there has been stony refusal to stage people power in response to calls by discredited opposition leaders, like the detained Joseph "Erap" Estrada, "Magdalo" mutineers, and communists trying to hitch-hike on every protest. Their State-of-the-Nation demonstrations flubbed.

Citizen passivity stemmed from the devil-and-deep-blue-sea options: a corrupt administration on one hand and an equally-tainted opposition on the other hand, incongruously chaired by a president booted out of Malacañang. Will anger over Cha-cha, this time, strike a different reaction?

There are indications that the President is trying to keep the cork on the people power genie even as De Venecia et al. blunder on. Common folk, in the end, will distill this constitutional puzzle into a question of fairness. For now, they agree with what Will Rogers once said: "We have the best mothballed Congress money could buy."

(E-mail: juanlmercado@gmail.com)

Day of reckoning

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

I WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO THANK THE *tongressmen* for doing what the opposition, in whole or in part, united or fragmented, has not been able to do all this time. That is to rouse the people from an immense and bovine stupor to protest wrongdoing. I had begun to wonder not just when we would ever get out of it but if we could still do so. Not all the efforts of the NGOs, the Church, the business community, and the media to damn the abuse and the corruption and the killings seemed to do the trick.

Then suddenly, in one fell swoop, the *tongressmen* turned things around. Then suddenly from out of the blue, the Batasan offered scenes reminiscent of Erap's impeachment trial—the very thing the *tongressmen* were trying to avoid when they blocked the impeachment bids against GMA. Scenes that spoke of the battle between Good and Evil, between decency and abuse, between those who were drunk with power and those who were steeled in body and spirit by humility. As with the Erap impeachment trial—though many of these scenes transpired well past the witching hour, to be replayed on TV only the following day to a larger audience—the events at the Batasan last week came across as a Morality Play.

As with the Erap impeachment trial, it produced images that have stuck in the public mind. The Erap impeachment trial had Miriam Santiago turning her wrath on the gallery after being embarrassed by Raul Roco on the subject of the natural career path of lawyers, and ordering three of the spectators out. The Batasan "debate" (it was more a monologue than a debate) had *Tongressman* Douglas Cagas shouting angrily at the gallery, "You are not representatives!" and being embarrassed by Teddy Casiño with the reminder that representatives are called representatives because they represent the people, who were to be found in the gallery. They will have the same endings: The Erap impeachment trial ended in Erap being impeached by way of People Power. The GMA-Batasan move to change the Charter will end up with usurpers being changed by way of People Power.

Truly, my deepest thanks to the *tongressman* for accomplishing what none of us could.

I am not surprised at all that GMA has tried to put as much distance as she can between herself and the Cha-cha as between herself and a leper. She hopes to douse water on the flying sparks that are threatening to turn into raging fire. But I personally would earnestly urge those who had planned to hold huge rallies at the Luneta and elsewhere to push through with them. Indeed to go beyond protesting the iniquity that is Cha-cha to the evil that is this government itself. That is so for several reasons.

First is that GMA may not easily wipe off from her person the stench of the cesspool she has created. She is a party to this crime. At the very least, fact that she has ordered the con-ass to stop must mean that she had the power all along to stop it. That she did not lift a finger to do so, until the public upheaval threatened to engulf her, makes her a "perp," as the crime dramas on TV now refer to them.

At the very most, the *tongressmen* wouldn't have thought they could ram this down the nation's throat with her help if she didn't owe them for killing the impeachment bids against her. The Cha-cha was the *tongressmen* collecting past due. It was GMA's own crime of stealing the elections that spawned it. That she has decided she is not going to pay her debt through her teeth, or at risk of jeopardizing her own survival, doesn't change things—at least for us, even if it does change things for her and her allies. That is for them to fight over, like jilted lovers, or like thieves over spoils. Ah, but no two parties more richly deserved each other.

Second is that the Cha-cha owes to GMA in an even more elemental sense. As I said yesterday, the inspiration for it is that she has been able to get away with murder in more ways than one. She has shown that in this country there is no law left other than the law of the jungle. All anybody has to do to impose his will on us is to be arrogant and ruthless enough to do it. The theft of the 2004 elections is to the Cha-cha as cause is to effect. Indeed, the theft of the 2004 elections is to any attempt to rape this country as cause is to effect. It is the poisoned well whence the polluted water comes from.

Third and most importantly, I don't see why we must content ourselves to just parry iniquity after iniquity and pat ourselves on the back after we have stopped one or the other. I don't know why we should content ourselves with taking a defensive stance, dancing happily like idiots after the Supreme Court has stuck down 1017, 464, CPR, and whatever unholy numbers and letters this government finds it in its pettily tyrannical mind to fling upon us. We never voted this government to power. It should be defensive, parrying blows from us, not the other way around.

Why should we be happy that Joe de Venecia has retreated from con-ass, tail between his legs? Why should we be happy that GMA has abandoned him, as she would, and has, anyone who threatens to weigh her down? What happens now, we start worrying about the threat of massive cheating in the May elections and try parrying that all over again? What have we become, a race of masochists and self-flagellants? Have we learned not just to endure pain but to love it?

It's time we took to the streets and made our roars heard. It's time we thundered forth like the voice of heaven itself, "*Tama na, sobra na, palitan na.*" It's time we tumbled down like a great flood and washed down the dregs of this country down the canals. It's time we sounded the trumpets to smash down the walls, announcing the day of reckoning has come.

The day for breaking chains has come.

Long odyssey of House Cha-cha effort

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

I WAS SEATED NEXT TO STAR COLUMNIST CHIT Pedrosa at that stormy House press conference last Saturday, which Renato Constantino Jr. interrupted by hurling invectives and insults at the House members. This stunned everyone. Pedrosa, after a few moments, started pounding the table and raised her voice in protest against his actions. I joined her protest and my beef, as was Chit's, was that Constantino should choose another forum, for we in the media went there to hear what the House members had to say. Constantino has the right to say anything he wants against anyone, but he shouldn't use that press con to air it.

As for my colleague Vic Agustin, I actually didn't see him douse Constantino. But he explained to me later that he merely told Constantino, *"Masyado kang mainit. Magpalamig ka muna."* Vic is normally a very pacific man, but he must have been incensed at that point, like many of us, by this non-media man's behavior.

* * *

The Senate reacted to the House challenge to opt for a constitutional convention by holding a long hearing to which "experts" who shared its members' views were invited. I didn't mind that or that some of the senators were plainly dishing out distortions or simply playing up to the gallery. Their antics only reinforced the perception that the Senate should be abolished. As I watched the hearing on TV, I thought how awfully late it was by at least two congresses. Had the senators shown more openness to the idea of change, they would have given full play to all sides and maybe we wouldn't be in the midst of this constitutional crisis.

* * *

Most of the Senate's guests stuck basically to the same argument: Don't "tinker" with Charter change now, as this is not the "right" time. But as FEU College of Law dean Andres Bautista, a member of the Consultative Commission set up by President Arroyo two years ago to study Cha-cha, put it, when is the right time? If there are really serious flaws in the charter, they're better addressed now, rather than later, he opined. Bautista said one flaw was its failure to state whether both chambers of Congress need to vote separately or jointly in amending the charter. Fr. Joaquin Bernas, S.J., testifying in the Senate, said the members of the 1986 Constitutional Commission may have forgotten that the Marcos Congress they sought to restore was no longer a unicameral chamber, unlike the one under the 1935 Constitution. Bautista argued that such a lapse only illustrates that the Cory charter, finished in five months, was "rushed."

* * *

When is the right time? Is Cha-cha being "rushed?" Last Sunday evening on dzRH, Cecile Alvarez and I had Cagayan de Oro Rep. Constantino Jaraula, who met that issue head on. Jaraula, tasked to draft a proposed constitution last year, recalled the long tortured odyssey of Cha-cha through several Congresses, with various lawmakers filing bills and resolutions (Speaker Jose de Venecia insists that he has been fighting for Cha-cha for over 15 years now). All their efforts came to naught because of the refusal of the Senate to act on them.

* * *

Jaraula recalled that his first act in the 11th Congress was to file a pro Cha-cha resolution through a con-con in 1998, but this met with a lot of opposition mainly due to the huge expense it would require. In July of 2003, the House filed a resolution for con-ass to convene with the constitutional amendments committee chaired by Rep. Eduardo Nachura, and the House adopted it. The Senate didn't act on it all through the 12th Congress. In July 2004 Jaraula, as committee chair, refiled that bill and it was approved on Nov. 30, 2005, but again, no action was taken by the Senate. Last week, the House passed a new resolution approving con-ass, and "inviting" the Senate to participate. It is this one currently that is on deck and kicking up a ruckus.

* * *

Jaraula opines that a con-con could be held right after the May elections and limited to six months only, since many studies on various parliamentary systems researched over the years and several draft constitutions are already available. Bautista is of the same mind, arguing that limiting the con-con's life would cut down on expenses and prevent a repeat of the 1971 rambling con-con. A Congress resolution would guarantee that con-con will take place, *wala ng atrasan*.

Moreover, electing delegates simultaneously with the May 2007 election would save taxpayers at least P2.5 billion, which would otherwise be spent in their election. Tarlac Rep. Gilbert Teodoro also pointed out at the press con that once both chambers pass that resolution, the con-con acquires a sovereign life and the politicos cannot meddle with it. The thing to do, Jaraula said, is to ensure through an education campaign that only the best and the brightest among our people get into it.

* * *

But the senators, without examining the House resolution, declared it "dead on arrival" at the Senate. Why the rush to amend the Constitution? the senators asked. In hurling the challenge to the Senate to pass a resolution authorizing con-con, House members reminded the senators that all along they have said they prefer it to a con-ass. But the senators have come up with all kinds of excuses to avoid it, including questioning the House's motives. I agree with Rep. Prospero Pichay who said the senators should just say, "We just don't like Cha-cha, period." No more pretenses.

* * *

The fact is that the Senate—with a budget of P3 billion a year, a pork barrel of P200 million for each senator with no direct constituency to account to, and after passing only four bills—is fighting for survival because of the threat that a unicameral chamber will be established. The senators like to point to House members' "agenda" e.g., extending their terms, lifting term limits, etc. But the senators also have their interest to protect. Also some of them just want to be president, never mind if it's plain to see that our political system has become a dead-end.

The first 'Philippine Idol'

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

THE "DECISION NIGHT" OF THE FIRST "PHILIPPINE Idol" competition was really supposed to be about announcing who among the "Big Three" finalists had just been voted by the public as the first winner. But during the impressively staged finals extravaganza Sunday night, two among the "Final 12" threatened to steal the limelight from Gian Magdangal, Jan Nieto and the eventual winner, Mau Marcelo.

I'd long been planning to write something about Pow Chavez, the sweet-voiced band performer with a "butch" image who turned down the judges' urgings for her to feminize her appearance and wear a dress with a gentle plea to "please let me be myself." I thought her integrity, and her determination to be true to herself and to have the rest of society accept her for what she is, was admirable and worth emulating. Indeed, I was heartbroken the night she was eliminated, when she thanked her supporters for their wholehearted support for her talent and acceptance of her person.

It was thus a sweet moment when, during the finals night, Pow was joined onstage by Aiza Seguerra, who overcame the obscurity that befalls child stars who outgrow childhood by remaking herself as a singer. Aiza's makeover entailed more than just repackaging, for it also involved getting the public to embrace her chosen identity and lifestyle. Her wonderful duet with Pow, therefore, was both reassurance and vindication, and dare I say a sign of the maturity of the Filipino audience?

* * *

MIGUEL, the "*bunso*" or youngest contestant among the Final 12, also had his moment to shine. Early in the finals round, it became obvious that Miguel was too raw, too young and too inexperienced when compared to the rest of the field. Judge Ryan Cayabyab thought it was because Miguel was being made to sing songs that didn't fit his still developing voice and his youthful demeanor.

Before he finally left the "Philippine Idol" stage, Miguel got a promise from Cayabyab that the composer would write a song tailored for him, if only to prove his talent. That chance came sooner than anyone thought, because last Sunday, "Mr. C" was ready with a brand-new song for Miguel, and Miguel more than acquitted himself, stunning skeptical critics.

It wasn't only that the song fit Miguel's range, but also that the melody and lyrics, which Miguel allegedly co-wrote with Mr. C, was the perfect vehicle for a young person to sing about hope and the future.

The rest of the segment, the last before the announcement of the winner, was devoted to the songs of Mr. C, performed with aplomb and persuasive energy by the rest of the Final 12 with a cameo appearance by "Mamita" Pilita Corrales. It reminded the live audience, and I hope the TV audience as well, what a musical treasure this country has in the person of Ryan Cayabyab who straddles with ease the worlds of classical and pop music and enriches them both.

* * *

THE "Philippine Idol" finals, and the entire premiere season, should also remind us of something we already know and sometimes take for granted. And that is that the country has a rich store of artistic talent, talent nurtured, so a writer once fancied, in the wombs of mothers who would sing and sway to music while they cooked meals or cleaned house.

During the performance night Saturday, I found myself seated beside a couple who were clad in orange T-shirts and greeting other audience members clad in the same color. I asked the woman if she was related to Gian, whose "team color" was orange. "Yes," she said with a shy smile. "He's my son."

Throughout the show, Enrie (short for Henrietta) Magdangal sat tense and quiet, breathing a sigh of relief only after Gian's final number, the soaring piece "Flying without Wings." I marveled at Enrie's restraint, telling her: "If I were you, I'd be crying by now," since Gian's performance was so moving and thrilling.

It had been a long and difficult journey to the "Idol" finals, Enrie recalled, counting the sacrifices her son and first-born had made just to pursue a singing career. "He has always loved to sing," she said, "when he was just a year old he could already sing 'Happy Birthday.'"

So it has been for the rest of the "Big Three." Jan Nieto had shown no early predilection for singing and performing, and as the judges remarked, if he had won, his example would have been an object lesson on the rewards of hard work, of how industry and humility can burnish raw talent and polish a winning personality.

To these two young men, my daughter has a piece of advice: Think Christian Bautista, the now-international star who, despite losing in a local talent search, went on to record a best-selling single and carve out a booming career here and abroad. It also helps that both are hot!

* * *

MAU Marcelo had the most vociferous and devoted fans throughout the competition, who saw her through the early difficult days when she almost bid an early good-bye to "PI." Hers has been an unusually challenging journey, from enduring the taunts of childhood playmates for her dark skin and less-than-attractive features, to discovering her talent through amateur singing contests and a stint in the church choir.

Hers is a truly underdog tale, and perhaps her narrow victory (all three received at least 30 percent of the votes) is a sign of just how Filipinos sympathize with the downtrodden.

But this early, there are already stories of "diva-like" behavior and attitude problems on Mau's part, while I'm troubled by her penchant for "*plakang-plaka*" (exact replicas) renditions of song of other performers, particularly Whitney Houston.

Drop the attitude, choose a better stylist, and stay true to your roots, Mau. That's the only way to do honor to your title as the first Philippine Idol.

Bush's last chance

WORLD VIEW

Shlomo Ben-Ami

THOUGH TRIGGERED BY THE NEED TO DEVISE an exit strategy from the Iraqi quagmire, the Iraq Study Group's grim report is a devastating indictment of the Bush administration's entire foreign policy. The report challenges the core principles of a faith-driven administration and of a president whose political gospel led him to a sharp departure from the culture of conflict resolution in favor of a crusade based on raw power.

A war that cannot be ended is sometimes worse than a war that is lost. Therefore, the Iraq report is more than a plan to rescue Iraq; it is a road map for extricating America from the mayhem of an unwinnable war. However much the study group shunned recommendations for a precipitous withdrawal, and avoided strict timetables for disengagement, their report is not only an unequivocal repudiation of Bush's "stay the course" obsession, but also a counsel to cut and run.

Indeed, there is no realistic chance that the Iraqi army and police will be able to take over combat responsibilities and effective policing any time soon. The entire security apparatus in Iraq is corrupt and infiltrated by insurgents. Nor is it at all clear to what degree the Iraqis retain a stake in the idea of a united Iraqi state worth fighting for. The report practically calls for ending all support to the Iraqi government if it fails to assume its responsibilities.

None of the Middle East's problems has a military solution, and none can be solved through unilateral action. The report is therefore right to challenge Bush's insistence on discarding both Iran and Syria as interlocutors for a more stable regional order. Iran has the most leverage inside Iraq, and Syria has become a vital crossing point for weapons and insurgents into the Iraqi battlefield. There is simply no way that Iraq can be stabilized without America moving from a policy of disengagement to one of engagement with these two major regional spoilers.

The report thus stands as a rebuke to Bush's entire "axis of evil" philosophy. It refuses to ascribe to Iran's secretive state an ideological rigidity that might not exist. Indeed, Iran has shown its ability to behave with startling pragmatism more than once, not least in its links to Israel and the United States during its war against Iraq in the 1980s, and in its assistance to the Americans in the war against the Taliban in Afghanistan.

But it is not only Iraq that requires regional support groups to reach a modicum of stability. All the problems of the Middle East—Iraq, the Arab-Israeli dispute, the need for political reforms, and Islamic terrorism—are interconnected. The interconnectedness of the problems in the outer circle of the region and those pertaining to the Arab-Israeli conflict in the inner circle was shown by the first Bush administration, which, in October 1991, following the first Gulf War, organized a major international conference aimed at securing an Arab-Israeli peace.

Neither the Israeli government nor its intimate ally in the White House can be expected to applaud the Iraq Study Group's call for a repetition of that logic, for it contradicts everything the Bush administration has championed. The report's recommendation for an international conference in the style of the Madrid peace conference is not only a timely indication of the linkage between the Israeli-Arab conflict and the region's other troubles, it is also a long overdue reminder that bilateral negotiations between the parties cannot produce an agreement. That realization prompted the all-Arab peace initiative of 2002, which established the conditions for an Israeli-Arab comprehensive settlement.

Alas, however bipartisan the Iraq Study Group's report may be, it is too much to expect that Bush will endorse all of its recommendations and admit the bankruptcy of his entire foreign policy. In fact, Bush has already expressed his objection to unconditional direct talks with Iran and Syria. Nor does he seem eager to open a rift with Israel by dragging its government to an international conference, the way his father did with Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir in 1991.

Bush will find it especially difficult to change his policy with respect to Iran. In order to ensure that the US is too harassed to be able to threaten it, Iran has consistently obstructed Bush's mission of regional transformation. The report urges the president to understand that the spoilers will not cease to be spoilers as a precondition of negotiations, but only as a result of them. At stake is a painful choice for Bush: to lead America into coexistence with what he considers a repugnant Islamic theocracy.

But Bush does not have many choices if he is to save his presidency from going down in history as an utter failure. His was a suicidal brand of statecraft from the outset. If he does not change course in Iraq and beyond, his presidency might draw the curtain on long decades of American hegemony in the Middle East—to the detriment of its closest allies in the region. *Project Syndicate*

Shlomo Ben-Ami, a former foreign minister of Israel, was the chief negotiator of the Camp David and Taba peace talks in 2000 and 2001 respectively.

Freedom from pain

YOUNG BLOOD

Mel

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—**Ed.**

WHEN I WAS 5 YEARS OLD, I WAS MOLESTED BY A construction foreman. It happened on a summer day when my aunt was having her house built next to ours. If it were not for my Yaya Nita who fetched me for lunch, I would have experienced a more dreadful fate.

I knew that what happened to me was not right, but I could not explain why. I didn't tell a soul, not even my parents. I was afraid that I would get a scolding and I did not want my parents to get into trouble. Young as I was, I knew that my parents would raise hell if I told them.

After that incident, I became a problem child. I bullied my brothers and my playmates and ruined other people's things. Many times I received a spanking for being "*maldita*." My siblings and playmates called me "Demoñita." I had turned into a problem child, and my parents did not know why.

I grew up being distrustful of men and fearing any intimacy. I was reticent. I did not feel like socializing or sharing my life with others. My friends would sometimes remark that I looked as if I was "*nawawala sa sarili*" or living in my "*sariling mundo*." I was not friendly and I did not have many friends.

I became a chain smoker and an alcoholic to help me forget what I had gone through as a child, albeit momentarily. I felt like vomiting every time I remembered what happened to me and I had nightmares about it. I did not talk to any of my friends about my childhood experience for fear of being stigmatized. I was afraid that the society would not be kind to people like me. I did not want to be frowned upon and talked about. I also did not want to ruin my chances of entering into a romantic relationship with the opposite sex.

It was when I started working in an NGO for street children that my healing process finally began. It was not an easy journey. My work, contrary to what I had expected, forced me to relive my painful past as a child. There were nights when I would have nightmares and wake up crying. There were days that I felt like quitting my work.

I buried myself in my work. But I still could not forget my dark secret. My work exposed me to urban poor children who experienced sexual, psychological, emotional and physical abuses. I saw them coming to the office when they had to meet with social workers and on the street when I conducted field visits. I read about them and I did numerous reports concerning them. And the more I learn about them, the more I was forced to face my own pain. I had to come to terms with my childhood experience.

In the end, I realized that I was not alone in my pain, that there were also many girls who suffered what I went through as a child. I also realized that I was far luckier; my experience was nothing compared to what most of the girls I knew went through in the hands of their own father or male relatives.

This realization made me decide to become a child rights advocate. I vowed to myself that I would help prevent child abuse any way I could.

This was not easy. I was not ready to talk about what I experienced when I was a child. It was very difficult for me to talk about it.

It was my special friend who helped me overcome my reluctance to open up. Because of his gentleness, patience and support, I was finally able to free myself from my pain little by little.

The day that I was finally able to tell my family and close friends about my childhood experience, I felt a great relief. But they were shocked and they could not believe it. They were very sorry to learn about the agony I had gone through when I was growing up. They said that I should have told them so they could have done something to help me.

But for me, the embrace of acceptance, understanding and support that I received from my friends and family were enough. Finally I had my freedom. I felt like flying! I felt light as a feather. I felt cleansed—as if all my worries and the dirt in my person had been washed away.

I am now happy and at peace with myself because I have come to terms with what happened to me and I have learned to let go and forgive. I will not, however, forget what happened. It will always stay with me for as long as I live.

Just like a scar, my dark childhood secret marred my life. But I believe the scar is there for a purpose. It is there to remind me that what happened to me can happen to others regardless of age, gender and socio-economic status, and that I have to do all I can to prevent it from happening to others.

Looking back, I think that if only my parents and I knew about child abuse prevention, maybe I would not have had an unhappy childhood and I would not have spent my youth in emotional and psychological turmoil. Abuse, no matter what form it takes, can bring irreparable damage to children's lives and this can stay with them for as long as they live.

No child should be made to experience any form of abuse. Parents, school teachers, and *yayas* should be made aware of the issue of child abuse. They should teach their children how to identify different forms of abuse, how to prevent them, and whom to tell or where to go to when they suffer abuse or if there is an attempt to commit abuse.

Equally important is keeping open the line of communication between the parents/*yayas* and the child. Victims of sexual abuse should be encouraged to open up to others. It is the only way to start the healing process.

When I decided to work in an NGO, the money was the reason at first. I did not know there was a more important reason why I got my first full-time job with an NGO. But now I believe that I was led to work with an NGO to help me begin the healing process from a very painful and traumatic childhood experience. Moreover, my work helped open my eyes to social realities. I realized that I got work in an NGO because my personal experience of abuse and my knowledge and skills in the social sciences can be put to good use helping people living in the margins of society.

Right now, I cannot imagine myself working in a different field. Although I tried working in the corporate world and got paid twice the salary I was earning when I was with an NGO, I prefer NGO or social development work. After working for three months in the corporate world, I left because I missed doing what I think I am good at: working for and with the poor. I decided to return to social development work in order to give back what it helped me gain: freedom from my childhood pain.

Mel, 28, is a child rights advocate and a graduate student of UP Diliman in Quezon City. She used to work in an NGO for street children in Paco, Manila.

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In search of idols in education

ASIDE FROM THE MIND-BLOWING victory of Manny Pacquiao over Erik Morales, which set off a national rejoicing, there was another mind-blowing victory achieved by a group of high school students from the First Asia Institute of Technology and Humanities (FAITH) in Tanauan City, Batangas. The students won the championship in the open category of the World Robotics Olympiad in Nanjing, China for their very creative entry "Rossum's Universal Restaurant, El Batangueño Coffeeshop."

This world-class victory was little noticed and less reported. While we admire Pacquiao's tremendous heart, spirit, courage, discipline and faith in God—traits which we should have individually and as a nation if we are to move forward—we feel that a little more media exposure should have been given this other world-class achievement. For we don't want our youth to become mainly boxers and prizefighters. We want them to be skilled in science and technology, creative and hard-working, at the same time grounded on solid social and spiritual values, which FAITH's vision and mission as an educational institution are all about. Thus, they can contribute more meaningfully to the real development of our nation.

Perhaps, it is this seamless integration of technology and human values (humanities) in its curriculum and operations that has made FAITH—despite a shoestring budget and equipment—the consistent national champion in Robotics. Over the years, FAITH, a relatively young school—it is only six years old—has triumphed over the best public and private schools nationwide in robotics competitions. This year, it became world champion, besting a well-equipped field of over 30 nations. This is a remarkable achievement by any standard and under any circumstance.

While it is perfectly alright to have the fearless Pacquiao as a national icon and idol, perhaps, responsible media should also make it a point to give more exposure to the other world-class achievements of Filipinos, especially in education, science and technology, so that our youth will have alternative icons and idols that they can imitate and aspire to.

—SAMUEL J. YAP,
118 Granada,
San Antonio Heights,
Sto. Tomas, Batangas

Magician belies claims in Licauco columns

THIS IS IN REFERENCE TO JAIME Licauco's Oct. 24 article:

1. He claims that, as a magician, I was known as "The Great Randi." I have never used that name, even when I was residing in the Philippines and performing on the night-club circuit.

2. He says that this Foundation offers a million-dollar prize "to anyone who could prove that telekinesis was true." We offer it—and have done so for 10 years now—for any evidence of a paranormal event or ability, not just "telekinesis." Note though that Licauco claims he has paranormal abilities, but he has not applied for the prize, which he should be able to win easily.

3. Licauco: "When somebody comes up to prove telekinesis, Randi changes the rules. Randi always finds loopholes so that, in the end, he concludes nothing has been proven." Again, he is absolutely wrong. No change of rules has ever taken place, and all applicants who have been tested have attested, in writing, that the conditions and parameters of the test were correct and acceptable. No "loopholes" can be invoked, because all parties agree to the conditions. Furthermore, as Licauco well knows—but failed to tell his readers—no conclusion is arrived at by me; that decision is entirely in the hands of independent observers.

4. Licauco: "Randi hounded and harassed well-known Israeli psychic Uri Geller, saying he was nothing but a fake psychic ... Geller finally fought back. He filed a harassment suit against Randi and won." Two more lies. I have never said that Geller is or was a "fake psychic." Geller never filed any harassment suit against me; in the one case he did file, he lost and had to pay $150,000 in sanctions.

5. Licauco: "The court ordered Randi not to come within a specified distance from Geller or he would be arrested. Randi was also asked to pay Geller a certain amount for all the mental torture and emotional trouble he caused." What can I say? Both these statements are outright, knowing lies, and Licauco knows it.

6. Licauco: "[Randi] heads a small but noisy group called the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (PSICOP) and publishes the Skeptical Inquirer, the main purpose of which is to show that those who believe in such things are nuts!" Another lie. I have not been connected with CSICOP for more than a decade.

7. Licauco: "I only want to share with interested people and readers strange but true events that are normally and routinely ignored by established science and the academic community." Untrue. Licauco has totally misrepresented the picture, and is lying to promote and shore up his view of reality.

8. "I told the students it was good to maintain a healthy skepticism, not to accept at face value everything a person told them, but to verify everything." Faced with Licauco's blatant and knowing misrepresentation of the truth, I would agree with him on this advice.

—JAMES RANDI,
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THE DAY after supertyphoon "Reming" finds a survivor drying clothes near his house in Brgy. Padang, Legazpi City.

While Bicolanos suffered, their representatives debated in Congress

MY HEART HURTS FOR OUR PEOPLE, especially for the Bicolanos who bore the main brunt of supertyphoon "Reming's" fury. They need immediate help from international and local aid agencies to ease their grief and hunger, as well as to keep them from more health risks.

My heart hurts even more to see that in the face of all their suffering, our political "leaders" are so rapt in revising the Constitution for their personal and selfish gains, never mind that the majority of Filipinos don't want Charter change, as consistently shown in SWS and Pulse Asia surveys; never mind that the Supreme Court, in its decision on the people's initiative, had admonished the Cha-cha advocates with selfish motives to refrain themselves from tampering with the Constitution.

Still, Speaker Jose de Venecia and his cohorts spent two evening-to-early morning sessions to railroad the amendment of their own rules so they could convene "Congress" as a constituent assembly. Congress aircon may have kept them comfortably cool as they debated on the floor of Congress. But it was a bitter cold night for the hundreds of evacuees who lost their homes at the height of Reming's onslaught. And unless those primarily concerned act fast enough, the evacuees will spend more bitter cold nights in the weeks to come.

The plight of the people of Bicol is a more urgent matter than the political agenda of our "leaders." It's a pity that the business of government is in the hands of this bunch of selfish politicians.

—MARCO M. DELOS REYES,
president, National Union of Students
of the Philippines,
nusp_national@yahoo.com

The genuine LP director general

THIS REFERS TO THE LETTER OF Eleazar Quinto on the leadership row in the Liberal Party. (PDI, 11/30/06)

If there is any misrepresentation in this sordid affair, it is on the part of Quinto who misrepresented himself in his letter as "director general, Liberal Party." The records will show that Quinto resigned as LP director general during the National Executive Council (Neco) meeting on Nov. 30, 2005. I was officially appointed to the position on Jan. 1, 2006, which appointment was confirmed by the Neco. This clarification is to set the record straight.

—CONCEPCION C. ASIS,
director general,
Liberal Party, Makati City

RP-US ties influenced verdict in rape case

IF THERE IS A CRIME LANCE CPL. Daniel Smith and the other three marines should be found guilty of, it is the way they rudely dumped "Nicole." Even if she were a professional whore, they still should not have done what they did in getting rid of her.

"Nicole" herself is guilty—for giving the world a bad image of the Filipino woman. I am so infuriated by her actions. I have always believed that a person is treated the way she wants to be treated, and she got what she asked for. I agree with Msgr. Pedro Quitorio that a person should always maintain his/her dignity no matter what.

I have a feeling that the decision was influenced by those who were always looking for ways to disrupt RP-US relations and cooperation. If there is really something wrong with the Visiting Forces Agreement, then some amendments should be made; unassociated events/activities should not be manipulated to destroy the agreement between the two countries. Those who are concerned with the VFA should review its contents to make sure that the agreement is fair and does not benefit the United States more than it does the Philippines.

We have to be at peace and in agreement with everyone in everything we do, not to the point of subservience. We only have to be just and reasonable in whatever agreement we enter into.

—PURA FLOR D. ISLETA, MD,
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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABC 5	Nickelodeon				TNA Wrestling		Metro		Big News	Ult Guinness World Records		Todo Max		Philippine Idol	Sentro	ALI		Araw-Araw Premyo Sa [illegible]	Letty La Mas Fea
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Inocente De Ti	Yu-Gi-Oh GX	Bart The Vandal Buster	Pangako Sa 'Yo	TV Patrol World		Kapamilya Deal Or No Deal	Super Inggo (8:15 PM)		Maging Sino Ka Man	Pinoy Dream Academy		Bandila	Correspondents	Mirada De Mujer
AXN		House (Season II)		Worst Case Scenario		The Ult Fighter (Season II)		Ripley's Believe It Or Not		Beastmaster (Season I)		The Amazing Race Asia		30 Seconds To Fame	AXN Xtreme Macau	Las Vegas (Season 2)		Numb3rs (Season 2)	
bTV	FIBA World Basketball	TV Shopping		NBA, Suns @ Magic					NBA Greatest Game w/ Michael Jordan				NBA Live	NBA Fantasy Hoops	NBA, Suns @ Magic				
Cartoon Network																	Aqua Teen Hunger Force		
Cinema One		Kapag Lumaban Ang Api				Kahit Kailan				Di Pwedeng Hindi Pwede				Jeannie, Bakit Ngayon Ka Lang				Minsan Minahal Kita	
Cinemax			Mobsters (3:35 PM)				Blade Squad (5:25 PM)			One False Move				Interview With The Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles				Masterminds	
CNN		Business International		World News	World Sport	Larry King Live		Business International	World Sport	World News Asia		World News	World Sport	World News Asia	World News Asia	Your World Today			
Crime/Suspense		Dominick Dunne's Power, Privilege & Justice		Law and Order: Special Victims Unit + 24		Profiler		Investigative Reports		Law and Order		Law and Order: Special Victims Unit + 24		The Closer		E-Ring		Oz	
Discovery Channel		I Shouldn't Be Alive		Rides		Hyperspace with Sam Neil Survival		Perfect Disaster		Tracking Deadly Vipers		Hour Asia		Aircrash Unsolved		Perfect Disaster		Asian Enigma	
Disney Channel	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	Totally Spies	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	Mickey Mouseworks	Lilo & Stitch	Emperor's New School	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr. Bean, The Animated Series	That's So Raven	Wonderful World Of Disney			Wicked Science/ Hannah Montana	Hannah Montana	Buzz On Maggie	Totally Spies	Wonderful World Of Disney	
ESPN		Watersports Programming Hot Water		X Games 11 Classic - 2006 Champs		New York Marathon		NFL Football Bears @ Rams						Sportscenter Asia	Pro Billiards '06		Pro Billiards '06		Sportscenter Asia
ETC	Rated Oh! 6	Project Runway 2		Change of Heart	Eliminidate	Blind Date	Fifth Wheel	Seinfeld	Ambush Makeover	The Tyra Banks Show		One Tree Hill 3		The OC Season 3		Entertainment Tonight	The Insider	The Tonight Show With Jay Leno	
ETC 2nd Avenue		Starting Over		The Maury Povich Show		The Jerry Springer Show		Dr. Phil		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition	The Ellen (Degeneres) Show		Wheel Of Fortune	Jeopardy	Blow Out 1		NBC Nightly News	The Inside Edition
Fox News		Hannity & Colmes		On The Record With Greta Van Susteren		The O'Reilly Factor		Your World With Neil Cavuto		Fox & Friends						Fox News Live			
GMA 7	Makita Ka Lang Muli	Now and Forever	Into The Sun		Dragonball Z	Ghost Fighter	Jewel In The Palace		24 Oras	Captain Barbell	Atlantika (7:45 PM)		Bakekang	A Rosy Life (9:15 PM)		Bahay Mo Ba 'To?		Saksi	
Hallmark Channel				Judging Amy		Just Cause		McLeod's Daughters		Strong Medicine		Family Law		Judging Amy					
HBO		Defending Your Life (3:15 PM)				Surviving Christmas				Lean On Me				Can't Hardly Wait				Six Feet Under S2 Static	
Hero TV	Class Of The Titans	Sunny Pig	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Saiyuki Reload	Naruto	Monkey Turn	Gundam Seed Destiny	Full Metal Panic	Galaxy Angels	Voltes V Evolution	Inuyasha III	Mirmo de Pon	Astroboy	Three-Eyed One	Naruto	Combattler V	Class Of The Titans	Yu-Gi-Oh GX
IBC 13		EZ Shop				Sarbis On The Go	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		EBC Earth Files		Japan Video Topics/ Arts		Travel Philippines	Japan Video Topics/ Arts	EBC Earth Files	IBC News Tonite	Home Shopping Network	
JackTV		Experience		Heat		X-Men Evolution	Justice League	Bottomline		Mad TV		Just For Laughs	Jamie Kennedy Experiment	My Name Is Earl	Always Sunny In Philadelphia	The Daily Show With Jon Stewart	Comedy Central	The Late Show David Letterman	
Lifestyle Network	Design Remix	Wolfgang Puck	My Country, My Kitchen	Rachel Ray		Sensible Chic	At Home With	Food 911	Boy Meets Grill	Martha		E! News Weekend		Rachel Ray		Whose Wedding Is It Anyway?		Napa Style	Sheila Bridges Designer Living
MTV Philippines		Sessions Salamin	VH1 All Access: Celeb Kids		Pimp My Ride	Cribs	MTV Hits			Get Spotted	5 Things About Salamin	2006 MTV Staying Alive Music Summit for HIV/AIDS				MTV Arena		VH1 Fabulous Life: The Fab 40 pt1	
MYX		Rock MYX	My MYX	Mellow MYX	Urban MYX	Take 5	MYX Versions	MYX Firsts	Star MYX	OPM MYX	Pop MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		MYXellaneous	Radio MYX	MYX News	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	MYXilog
National Geographic		Nat'l Geographic Specials		Catastrophe		Mad Lab	Mad Lab	Top 5		Nat'l Geographic Specials		WOW!		Mad Lab	Mad Lab	Air Crash Investigation		Hunter Hunted	
NBN					Diyos Ko, Mahal Mo Ba Sila?	Teledyaryo W/ Ray Langit & Angelique Lazo		Tinig Ng Bayan		Talakayan Sa Isyung Pulis		Teledyaryo Final Edition		World Pool Championship					
Net 25	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	In Focus	Euromaxx	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Tamang Daan		News Beat (Live)		OpenLine Live	Gabay Sa Kalusugan	INC Chronicles (English)	INC Chronicles (Filipino)	Ang Pagbubunyag		World Report	In Focus	DWTV Journal News	Euromaxx
Nickelodeon	Chalkzone	The Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	Naturally Sadie	Romeo	SpongeBob SquarePants	My Life As A Teenage Robot	Danny Phantom	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	The Fairly Odd Parents	Drake & Josh	Unfabulous	SpongeBob SquarePants	The Fairly Odd Parents	All That	Romeo	As Told By Ginger	My Dad The Rock Star	
PBO			Silang Matatapang				Alindog				Papunta Ka Pa Lang, Pabalik Na Ako				Ang Lahat Ng Ito'y Para Sa'yo				Indecent Professor
Qtv	Pawnshop No. 8	Samurai X	Hikaru No Go	The Prince Of Tennis	MMS (My Music Station)		Moms		Winter Sonata	Irene	Emperor Of The Sea	Takeshi's Castle	Extreme Makeover: Home Edition		News On Q	Sana'y Muling Makapiling		Irene	Acts
RPN 9	TV Shopping	Golf Power		Fistorama	Mr. Fighting	RPN Aksyon Balita		Complete Savages	Jake In Progress	Project Runway		Australia's Next Top Model		Good Girls Don't	Sex & the City	Newswatch Now	Tuesday Night Treat		
SBN 21								Sony Music Video				Oras Ng Himala		Oras ng Katotohanan		Sony Music Video		Sony Music Video	
Solar Sports										Superfights or Stars of Future				ITZ		Sportsdesk		AG Volleyball Women's Finals	
Star Movies	Blue Crush			Raging Sharks (4:15 PM)				Miracle Of The Heart (5:50 PM)			Shattered Glass (7:25 PM)			AVP: Alien Vs. Predator			Phantom Below (10:45 PM)		
Star World	Becker	The Bold & The Beautiful		General Hospital		Desire Table For Three		The Simpsons	Malcolm In The Middle	Star News Asia	Seinfeld	One Tree Hill		Desperate Housewives		Desire Table For Three		Seinfeld	One Tree Hill
Studio 23								Blog	Pinoy Dream Academy	Wazzup Wazzup	Gilmore Girls	Smallville (8:15 PM)		24		News Central	Oprah (10:45PM)		MYXilog
UnTV				KNC Show	Kakampi Mo Ang Batas		Kaka at Cesar Kaagapay Nyo		Public Hearing	Make My Day		Ang Dating Daan (8:15PM)							

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.

200-truck relief caravan heads for Bicol

From page A1

Seniang killed at least 10 people in its weekend sweep across the Visayas, pummeling Boracay island, a white-sand resort and a major tourist draw.

Power and water services in Boracay were knocked out and houses were damaged.

Senior Insp. Christopher Prangan of the Boracay police said two people were killed and four other crew members of boats that bring tourists to the island were still missing and feared dead, Agence France Presse reported.

67 boats destroyed

Police said 67 boats, including speedboats and ferries used to transport tourists to the island, were destroyed.

Boracay's famous white sands were littered with debris after high winds tore up roofs and trees.

"Some people are crying because they are afraid and in shock," said Roselle Gallano, a waitress at a coffee shop close to the beach front. "Many houses were damaged, some have been tilted."

President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said she would personally send off the caravan from the Diosdado Macapagal Boulevard in Pasay City at 10 a.m.

The caravan would be carrying bags of rice, vegetables, canned goods, mineral water, milk and non-food items, such as utensils, clothing, blankets, towels and medicines.

Donors thanked

Some 1,500 people will have no use for the relief supplies. They were the people killed or still missing and feared dead after mudslides and floodwaters swamped their villages, mostly in Albay, when Reming battered Bicol on Nov. 30.

In a coordination meeting for the caravan at the National Disaster Coordinating Council headquarters yesterday, Ms Arroyo thanked the organizations, including foreign donors and private individuals, who volunteered help in the relief efforts.

"We reiterate our call for more volunteers in the area so Bicol can recover at the soonest possible time," said Ms Arroyo.

NDCC executive officer Glenn Rabonza said various government agencies had committed a total of 175 trucks loaded with relief supplies. Private groups committed 46 other trucks.

The caravan will pass by the South Luzon Expressway and the provinces of Laguna, Quezon and Camarines Sur before hitting Albay.

Destructive typhoons

The supplies will be deposited at Camp Simeon Ola in Legazpi City in Albay and at the sports complex in Pili, Camarines Sur, Rabonza said.

He said the authorities expected more trucks to join the caravan before it reached Bicol.

The NDCC confirmed that Reming left 715 people dead, 2,174 injured and 764 others missing.

In Albay, 613 persons were confirmed dead and 710 more still missing.

As of Dec. 10, 110,701 people were still staying in evacuation centers.

Reming caused P4.48 billion worth of damage to infrastructure and agriculture.

Seniang forced the evacuation of some 90,000 people in Albay, Romblon, Capiz, Aklan, Antique, Cebu, Leyte, Southern Leyte, Samar and Biliran.

It also sank six fishing boats in the Masbate waters, killing one fisherman.

Aklan and many parts of Capiz remained without electricity.

So far, 10 people have been reported killed in the wake of Seniang. Besides the two killed in Boracay, two deaths were reported in Capiz, three in Romblon, and one death each in Tacloban, Masbate and Marinduque.

Visayas losses

Seniang triggered flash floods in Marinduque, drowning a 6-year-old boy.

John Jerick Rey, a Grade 1 student, was crossing a creek with his aunt in the town of Torrijos when he was carried off by the floods.

The Department of Agriculture in Eastern Visayas reported agricultural losses amounting to P282 million as a result of Seniang's fury.

"Communication lines in Samar, Eastern Samar and Northern Samar, as well as in Biliran, remain bogged down. And except in Southern Leyte and some parts of Leyte, all the provinces in the region [suffered] power [outages]," said Chief Supt. Eliseo de la Paz, chair of the Regional Disaster Coordinating Council.

Seniang left behind impassable roads in Central and Southern Luzon and in Eastern Visayas, the Department of Public Works and Highways said. *With reports from Leila B. Salaverria in Manila; Marlon Ramos and Gerald Gene R. Querubin, Inquirer Southern Luzon; Jhunnex Napallacan, Nestor P. Burgos Jr., Joey A. Gabieta and Ven S. Labro, Inquirer Visayas; and AFP*

TYPHOON "Seniang" struck this seaside community in Ibajay, Aklan, destroying houses and toppling trees, on its way out of the country.

ARNOLD ALMACEN/INQUIRER VISAYAS

ALL ITEMS MUST GO

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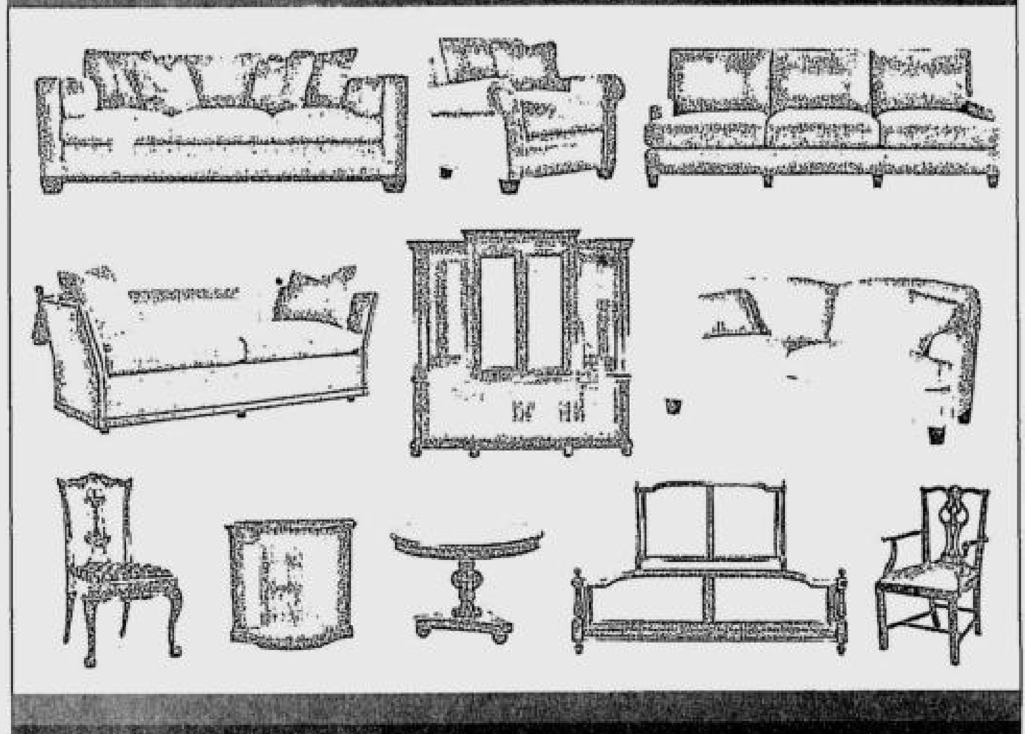

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A2-460 Series of 2006

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Lucena singer is 'Philippine Idol'

From page A1

the Araneta Coliseum on Saturday.

Runners-up Magdangal and Nieto received cash prizes of P250,000 each from ABC 5.

"I really didn't expect to win. I left everything to God," Marcelo told a group of writers shortly after the show.

"I felt I was the underdog here, especially if one considered my family's financial status. Both Gian and Jan came from good and expensive schools and they had enough money to support their campaign. I, on the other hand, only came from Quezon National High School."

But Marcelo said she was aware that, apart from her family and close friends, there were people who faithfully supported her.

"That's why I didn't lose hope although I still got scared and doubted my chances of winning," she said in Filipino.

Public voting

The winner of the talent show was determined through public voting via phone and SMS that commenced immediately after the three finalists' performances on Saturday night.

Marcelo won by a narrow margin of 1.42 percent, "Idol" host Ryan Agoncillo said. The show's producers did not say who placed second.

On Sunday night, Marcelo apologized for a comment she made early on in the contest that sparked debates on various Internet sites dedicated to "Philippine Idol."

Marcelo, among the contestants whom "Idol" judge Pilita Corrales had told to lose weight, had remarked that the show "was nothing but a beauty contest."

"It turned out that it's not," said the singer, who managed to lose 12 lb during the competition. "I made that comment earlier because most of the other female contestants are good-looking. That's where I based my observation. I'm sorry for saying that."

On Saturday night, judges Francis Magalona and Corrales predicted victory for a male "Idol" contender. Marcelo said this made her doubt herself.

"I felt really down. I guess that's why the judges felt I didn't do well in my first two performances that night," she said.

Corrales and Magalona shared judging chores with master composer Ryan Cayabyab.

Three songs

The contestants were made to perform three songs—their personal choice, the judges' choice and a song picked for them by Sony-BMG.

Marcelo sang Mariah Carey's "Love Takes Time," "Balut," which is a song by Cayabyab, and Whitney Houston's "On My Own."

"I deserve to win," said Marcelo. "I've been joining amateur singing contests since I was 8. This is the fulfillment of all my dreams. I will not let my supporters down."

A grand welcome awaits Marcelo in her hometown of Lucena.

"The city government will give her a majestic welcome befitting a Lucenahin who made every citizen of this city feel proud," Mayor Ramon Talaga Jr. told the INQUIRER.

"As a matter of fact, my first order for the day was to make a beautiful float that she will use in the grand parade around the city."

He also said he would send Marcelo and her husband Richie on a round-trip vacation in Hong Kong as his personal gift.

Marcelo's relatives were jubilant with her victory. The first Philippine Idol will represent the country in the upcoming World Idol.

"I'm so very, very happy. My granddaughter deserves the title. She's really good," said Erlinda Reyes, Marcelo's grandmother.

Reyes said she shed tears when Marcelo was declared the winner.

She advised her granddaughter not to forget the ordinary people that supported her.

Undaunted by criticisms

"She should thank them all and never forget them," Reyes said.

Even vendors in the Lucena market were euphoric at Marcelo's victory.

"*Sulit ang aking mga text votes sa kanya* (All my text votes for her were worth it)," said Fe Mendoza, a vegetable hawker.

Jenelyn Ilagan, Marcelo's stepsister, said the Lucena delegation at the show was disappointed with the negative comments of resident judges after her first two songs during the finals.

"We could sense that Mau was all alone and even the judges were determined to frustrate her. But she exhibited her true fighting form when she impressively sang her last piece for the evening, which brought the whole Araneta audience to its feet. From thereon, and with the masses solidly behind her, she was already the winner. They could no longer stop it," Ilagan said.

Jenelyn's husband Martin brought Marcelo to Singapore in 2004 to give her foreign exposure in singing. He works in Singapore as an electronics engineer.

Big 3

All the 10 songs in Marcelo's first CD recording were composed by Martin.

The two-night "Idol" showdown was dubbed "Big 3 at the Big Dome."

Top performers Gary Valenciano, Hajji Alejandro, Cueshé, G Tongi and The Sexbomb Dancers appeared as guests. Agoncillo co-hosted the event with Heart Evangelista.

The sixth season of the phenomenally popular talent search "American Idol" will air on ABC 5 starting Jan. 17.

Encore, Novellino!

Bravissimo!

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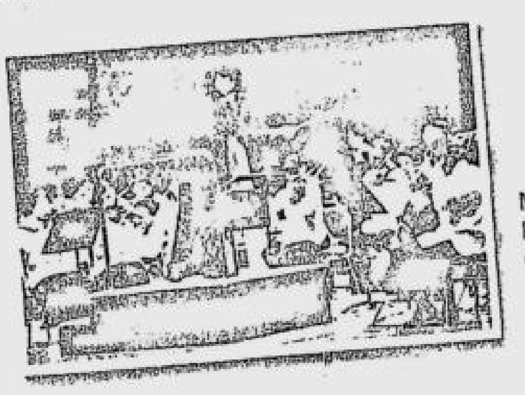
♪ The UP Vocal Ensemble



Manila Philharmonic Orchestra

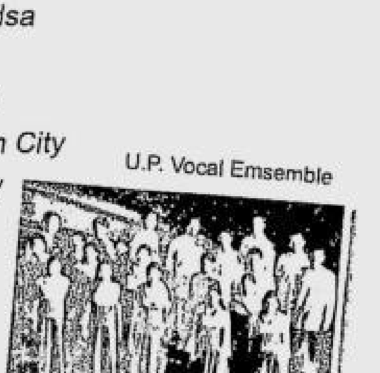
Manila Philharmonic Orchestra

Dec. 17	*5:00 p.m.*	*Island City Mall, Tagbilaran, Bohol*
Dec. 18	*5:00 p.m.*	*SM City Cebu*
Dec. 19	*5:00 p.m.*	*SM City Iloilo*
Dec. 20	*4:00 p.m.*	*Robinsons Metro East*
Dec. 23	*5:30 p.m.*	*The Block, SM City North Edsa*
Dec. 27	*6:00 p.m.*	*SM City Baguio*
Dec. 28	*3:00 p.m.*	*CSI The City Mall, Dagupan*
Dec. 29	*3:00 p.m.*	*NE Pacific Mall, Cabanatuan City*
Dec. 30	*5:00 p.m.*	*Bay City Mall, Batangas City*

UP Vocal Ensemble

Dec. 11	*4:00 p.m.*	*Robinsons Place Manila*
Dec. 15	*6:00 p.m.*	*Eastwood City*

U.P. Vocal Emsemble



Novellino Wines

MANILA PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

U.P. Vocal Ensemble

4 students beat 64 others to clinch this year's edition of National Quiz Bee

By Tina G. Santos

OF THE 68 STUDENTS FROM the country's 17 regions who competed in the grand finals of this year's 27th National Quiz Bee, four emerged champions in the four subject categories.

The winners were elementary school students Vladimir Calanasan Jr. of San Pablo Central School, San Pablo City, in the Makabayan (Philippine History, Culture and Values) category, and Dale Wilson Garcia III of Centex Batangas in the Mathematics category.

In the high school division, Vincent Jerven Barimbao of Gusa Regional Science High School, Cagayan de Oro City, won in the Science category, while college student Rae Emmanuel Echaveria of the University of the Philippines in the Visayas topped the General Information and International Affairs category.

The prizes included a Presidential trophy, personal computers, encyclopedia sets, scholarship grants and gift packages from sponsors, which included the INQUIRER.

There were no cash prizes handed out, Pettyzou Tayag, Quiz Bee Foundation executive director, explained, because "we believe money is not a good motivation for self-achievement for students."

"But the honor it [winning] brings to the students, mentors and schools that compete is proof-positive of the high moral goals these participants aim for, by joining in a competition for the sake of academic excellence, and not for material gain," Tayag said.

The national quiz bee, started in 1977, is the longest running and most prestigious academic competition in the country with the mission to strengthen education through academic excellence and values formation.

Prior to Saturday's grand finals, all the regional finalists attended an all-expense paid four-day camp where they took part in fellowships, seminars, tours and games.

The camp, Tayag said, was aimed at promoting camaraderie, unity, understanding, sportsmanship and nationalism among its participants.

In 2005, the INQUIRER, in its continuing partnership with the Quiz Bee Foundation, awarded 20 life-size sculptures of the newspaper's carabao mascot, Guyito, painted by the some of the country's foremost artists, to the public high schools around the country that topped last year's National Quiz Bee.

Leakage scandal doesn't faze alien nursing students

By Christian V. Esguerra

UNFAZED BY THE scandal generated by the leakage in last June's licensure exams, many Filipinos based in the United States continue to send their children here to study nursing.

They go, of course, to the top schools here like the University of the Philippines, University of Santo Tomas and the University of the East-Ramon Magsaysay (UERM), according to Rosario-May Mayor, president of the Philippine Nurses Association of America.

Mayor, 58, is currently the director for performance improvement in the Department of Veterans Affairs in the Bronx, New York City. She is in town to help advocate for the improvement of the local nursing educational system.

Very expensive

Mayor said not only was it hard to get into a nursing school in the United States, it was also very expensive.

Last year, 144,000 nursing school applicants were rejected because there weren't enough teachers, she told reporters yesterday at a press conference.

Once admitted, a student in the US could spend $26,000 (P1.28 million) a year.

Top Philippine nursing schools provide a viable alternative, Mayor said.

At the UERM, for instance, nursing Dean Carmencita Divinagracia said tuition was low compared to US rates. The approximate rate every semester was around P28,000 for freshmen, P38,000 for sophomores, and P40,000 for juniors and seniors.

This semester, the UERM-College of Nursing had 15 foreign students enrolled, including a Korean, a Nigerian and a number of Fil-Americans.

Divinagracia said Fil-American students with dual citizenship could opt to take the licensure exams here or in the United States.

Mayor stressed the need to improve the quality of nursing education, especially after the leakage controversy in the June board exams.

She said the scandal was so serious, she feared the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) might implement a "blanket denial for VisaScreen" covering applicants of the June 2006 batch.

The CGFNS is the agency that determines the eligibility of foreign-trained nurses to work in the United States. VisaScreen is a trademark name of the CGFNS' exam which certifies foreign health care professionals. It does so by "verifying and evaluating their credentials to ensure that they meet the government's minimum eligibility standards."

"Any VisaScreen applications that CGFNS receives from June 2006 passers will be accepted but deferred for a final decision until this assessment process is complete," the CGFNS said in a statement in October.

Denied

"If the assessment concludes that the license is not comparable, the VisaScreen application from a June 2006 passer will be denied."

Mayor, who's been working in the US since 1971, said the actions by the Court of Appeals, the Professional Regulation Commission and Malacañang had not properly addressed the leakage problem.

"The powers that be were not decisive as they should have been and people suffered and will continue to suffer because of that," she said, noting that there were now 126,000 vacancies for nurses in American hospitals.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, December 12, 2006
Our Lady of Guadalupe

1st Reading: Zec 2:14-17 (or Rev 11:19; 12:1-6, 10)

Gospel: Luke 1:39-47

Mary then set out for a town in the Hills of Judah. She entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leapt in her womb. Elizabeth was filled with holy spirit, and giving a loud cry, said, "You are most blessed among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb! How is it that the mother of my Lord comes to me? The moment your greeting sounded in my ears, the baby within me suddenly leapt for joy. Blessed are you who believed that the Lord's word would come true!"

And Mary said:

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit exults in God my savior!

Commentary

Our Lady of Guadalupe is the patroness of the Americas and the Philippines, drawing all peoples to her unborn Son of Justice. She and her child will dwell among the people. Keep still in his presence! Mary brings the Word of God to Elizabeth's child who hears the presence of Justice and Peace and leaps for joy, and the Spirit springs upon them. Blessed are all those who hear, believe and set out in haste to bring the Word into their world. Do our lands reflect their presence dwelling upon us?

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imagine lighting up your Christmas with big prizes

The perfect gift this Christmas would be a Samsung mobile phone. What makes it an even cooler gift is that when you buy it from November 20 - December 18, 2006 at any of the authorized dealers listed below, you get a chance to join the raffle. Simply fill in the warranty card, drop them at the drop box found at the dealer's store and get a chance to win big prizes. Just imagine, if you win, it would be like getting a 20" LCD with a Home Theater System for only the price of a cell phone. Hurry and buy a phone now. Draw date will be on December 23, 2006.

MECHANICS:

1. Customers who purchase Samsung phones during the promo period are qualified to join the raffle.
2. Buy any of the following Samsung phone models (C130, X530, E760, E690, E890, D520, X820, D830, E900, D820, D840 or D900) from any of the participating dealers within the promo period of November 20-December 18, 2006 for a chance to win big prizes. Customers shall fill up the warranty card and drop it in drop boxes located at participating dealers' stores. Deadline for submission of entries is on December 18, 2006, store closing hours.
3. Prizes include: an MP3 Player, a DVD Player, a Digital Camera, a Washing Machine, a 21" (53.34 cm) Flat TV, an X820 Mobile Phone, a Laser Printer, a Mini-Component, a Refrigerator, an Air Conditioner, a 20" (50.8 cm) LCD TV and a 20" (50.8 cm) LCD TV with a Home Theatre System.
4. Samsung Electronics shall pay the 20% TAX for Prizes exceeding P10,000.00.
5. Raffle Draw will be held on December 23, 2006, 4:00 pm at the Samsung Electronics Philippines Corp. Office.
6. A participant can win only once. If a name wins more than once, he gets the bigger prize.
7. Winners will be notified through registered mail.
8. Just simply present a valid ID and the original receipt of the purchase upon claiming the prize. These prizes can be claimed at the Samsung Electronics Philippines Corp. Office.
9. All prizes must be claimed within 60 days upon notification otherwise it shall be forfeited in favor of the sponsor upon prior approval of DTI.
10. Employees of Samsung Electronics Philippines Corp., CHEIL Communications, TEQUILA\Manila and participating outlets including their relatives up to the second degree of consanguinity or affinity are disqualified from joining the promotion.

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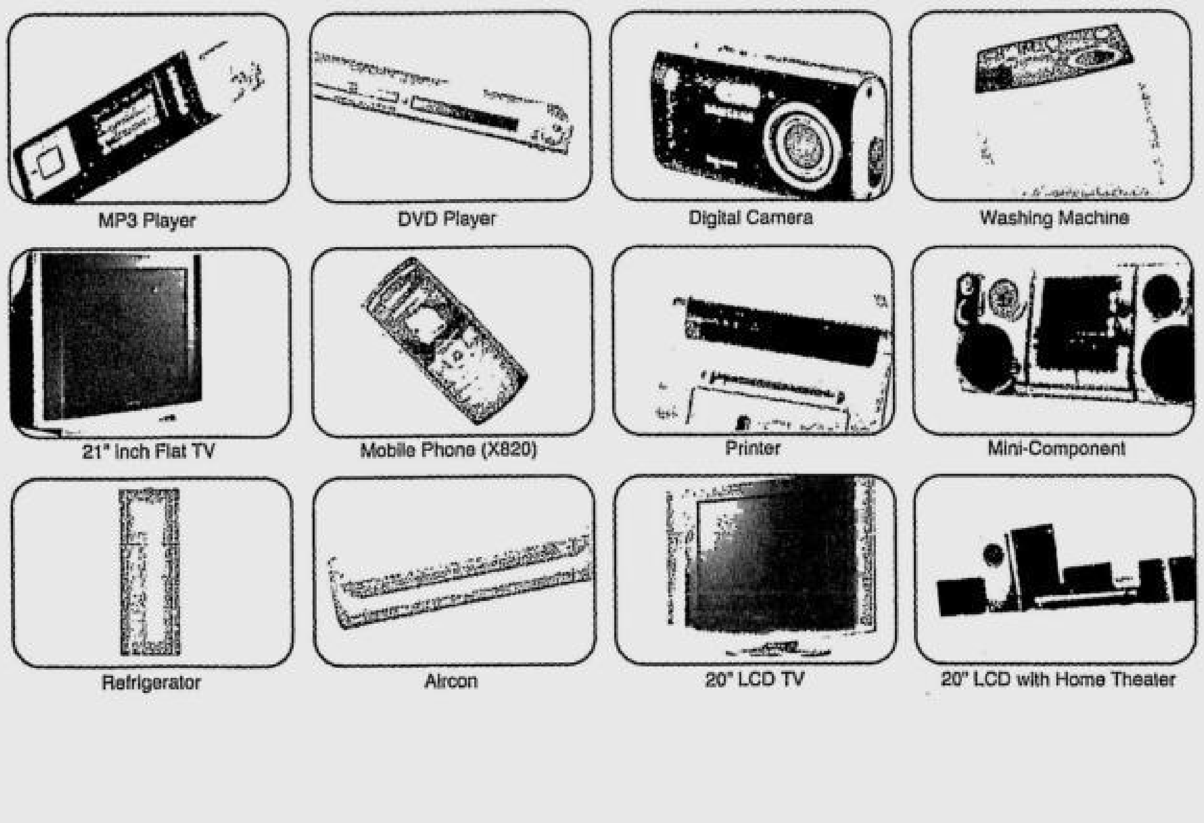

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Labor leader gunned down in Cavite

CAMP VICENTE LIM, LAGUNA—A LEADER OF A MILITANT workers' group was shot dead by a lone gunman in front of the gate of a semiconductor factory where he formerly worked in Imus, Cavite on Monday morning, police said.

The attack also wounded the victim's companion and another worker.

Jesus "Butch" Servida, 36, died of a lone gunshot wound in the chest while being rushed to a nearby hospital.

He was the former vice president of the Samahang Manggagawa sa EMI-Yazaki (SME) and one of the leaders of the Solidarity of Cavite Workers whose members heckled President Macapagal-Arroyo during her speech at the graduation ceremony of the Cavite State University last April.

Supt. Efren Castro, Imus police chief, said Servida was in a jeep driven by a certain Michael Umides when the gunman appeared from nowhere and shot him at close range in front of the EMI-Yazaki factory in Barangay Anabu 2A at around 6:30 a.m.

Wounded in the attack were Joel Sale, 32, also a former member of SME who was seated at the back of Servida, and Kenny Mari Severo, a contractual employee of the company.

The leftist Kilusang Mayo Uno quickly condemned the killing, blaming it again on the government's failure to stop the series of murders of leftist and labor militants.

KMU has filed a complaint against the Arroyo administration at the International Labor Organization for the killings and rampant violations of labor rights.

Castro said Servida and Sale were brought to the University Medical Center in Dasmariñas town for treatment.

He said the gunman fled on foot after shooting Servida.

Servida's killing happened exactly three weeks after the union president of Alaska Milk Corp. was gunned down in San Pedro, Laguna.

He was also the third union leader at EMI-Yazaki ambushed in the last two years.

SME has over 4,000 members.

In January 2005, Cris Abad was shot dead by a still unidentified man also in Cavite.

Abad was the executive vice president of Kristong Manggagawa Independent (KMI), the other union at the semiconductor firm. He was killed after he reportedly spilled the beans on the supposed irregularities of the KMI leadership.

On April 28, 2006, former SME president Gerry Cristobal narrowly escaped death after he was shot by SPO1 Romeo Lara, an intelligence operative of the Imus police station, while he was on his way to a rally.

Lara, however, claimed it was Cristobal who ambushed him and his companion.

Castro said Servides was no longer a labor leader at the time of his killing because he was already terminated from his work last year.

"Before you can call somebody a labor leader, you should be connected with a union or a company. That's my understanding," he said.

Castro said police would focus their investigation on a possible business rivalry. He said just a week ago, Servida and his wife won the bidding to run the factory's canteen.

"Maybe the victim got the ire of the former concessionaire of the canteen," he said.

He said since then, the victim would usually deliver vegetables and other supplies for the canteen in the morning.

A ranking police official, who asked not to be identified because he was not authorized to speak on the case, supported Castro's theory.

The official said earnings of the canteen business, which average P500,000 a month, "was enough reason for the killing."

He said the stall that Servida and his wife operate inside the factory was one of three canteens in the area.

"There are more than 8,000 employees in the factory. Imagine how much money one could earn if you can run the canteen for three years," the source said.

He added: "Then try to imagine how the former concessionaire feels about losing his business." *Marlon Ramos with reports from Niña Catherine Calleja and Delfin T. Mallari Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon and Jerome Aning in Manila*

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MILF encouraged by Bush backing for peace talks

COTABATO CITY—THE MORO ISLAMIC LIBeration Front (MILF) welcomed US President George W. Bush's promise to speed up development aid in Mindanao once government and the rebel group signed a peace deal.

Muhammad Ameen, MILF chief secretariat, said Bush's pronouncement would push both government and MILF negotiators to draw from their "remaining stamina" to overcome any obstacle that would stand in the way of signing a peace deal.

"This is the first time that Washington's leader showed deep concern in resolving the decades-old conflict in the south. We welcome it," Ameen said.

Bush gave the assurance when he accepted the credentials of the new Philippine ambassador to the United States, Willy Gaa, at the White House.

Bush said the United States was committed to fostering a climate of peace in Mindanao and would be ready to provide quick-disbursing assistance once an agreement is signed with the MILF.

The peace talks recently bogged down over the MILF's demand to include close to 1,000 villages as part of their proposed future homeland without a referendum.

The government rejected the demand, saying it was against the Constitution. The government said it could only allow 600 predominantly Muslim villages to be included in their propose homeland.

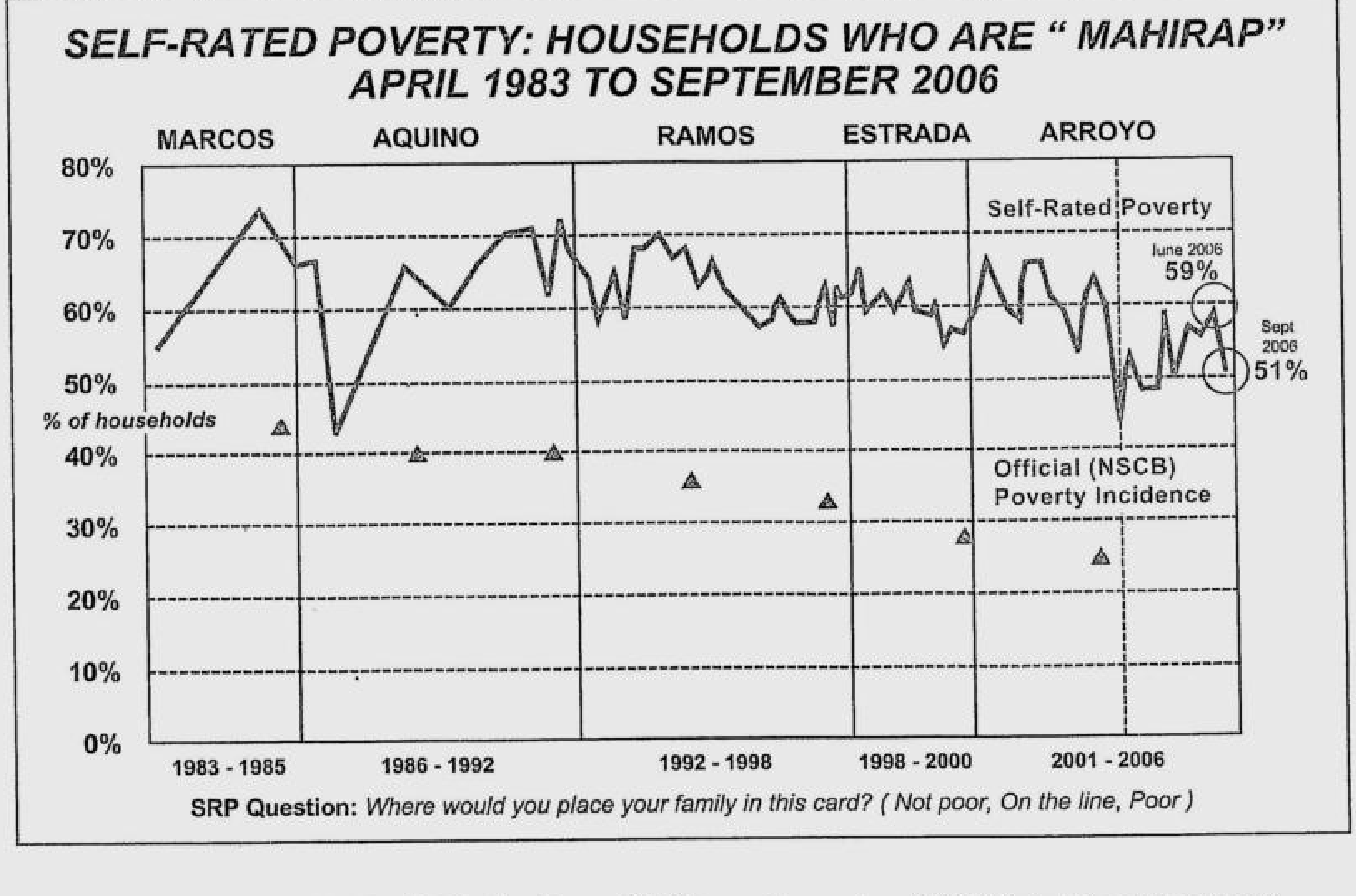
Jun Mantawil, a member of MILF peace panel, said the peace talks with the government will not take place this year as both panels are busy preparing their respective positions on territorial aspects of ancestral domain issue.

"Definitely, there is no resumption this month, because there is limited time for the parties to prepare. However, the panels are slowly inching their way towards a resumption of the talks in January next year," Mantawil said. *Jeoffrey Maitem, Inquirer Mindanao*

5.5M FILIPINOS RISE OUT OF POVERTY

"Our lives are better, though not as comfortable as the middle class but it definitely is better than what it was before."

Leticia Tajan-tajan, member of Tamban SEA Kaunlaran Association,
Governor Generoso, Davao Oriental



SRP Question: *Where would you place your family in this card? (Not poor, On the line, Poor)*

The 3rd Quarter 2006 Social Weather Report (SWS) says the number of "Self-Rated Poor Households" went down from 59% in June 2006 to 51% in September 2006. This translates to about 5.5 million Filipinos rising out of poverty.

The Arroyo administration has the lowest average "Self-Rated Poverty" statistics among all recent administrations.

Magtulungan tayo. Labanan ang kahirapan.

Students tapped in war on abuse of gov't cars

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—CHECK THE LIcense plate. If it has red letters and numbers, it's wrong.

This is what antigraft crusaders here are urging children, being driven to school by their parents who are government officials or employees, to learn.

A Church-based antigraft volunteers group and the Office of the Ombudsman have tapped high school and college students in the enforcement of "Operation Red Plate," a nationwide campaign against the illegal use of government vehicles.

The People's Graft Watch of Iloilo Inc. (PGII) and the Ombudsman in the Visayas yesterday held a seminar for 200 high school and college students on the ills of graft and corruption in the country and how the students could help curb it.

"We think starting with the young will help our campaign especially in the long-term," said Msgr. Meliton Oso, PGII president and director of the Jaro Archdiocese social action center.

Oso urged the students to be the "eyes and ears of the Ombudsman wherever you are."

He said they have asked the help of the student councils of the high schools and colleges in Iloilo City to help monitor the use of government vehicles.

"We are telling them that it is safe and easy to be watchdogs against these abuses," said Oso.

The students are advised to report to the Ombudsman vehicles with red colored plates in schools, shopping malls and entertainment centers.

Virginia Palanca-Santiago, officer in charge of the Office of the Ombudsman-Visayas, said transporting family members to schools and offices is among the most common form of misuse of government vehicles.

She said anyone who suspects that a government vehicle is being used for personal purposes should list down the vehicle's plate number, description, government agency or office that is usually marked on the vehicle and the time and place it was seen.

But Santiago has one tip: Don't make noise and just report to the Ombudsman because the violator could easily prepare a "trip ticket" to show that the vehicle was used on official business.

Santiago said they have also asked the help of security guards of shopping malls and beach resorts to report violators.

Violators face administrative liabilities punishable with a suspension from work for six months. They could also be held criminally liable for malversation with imprisonment depending on the cost of gasoline use and depreciation value of the vehicle.

"We have keep on telling them that what they are doing is wrong. They are using government property for personal gain," Santiago told reporters at the seminar.

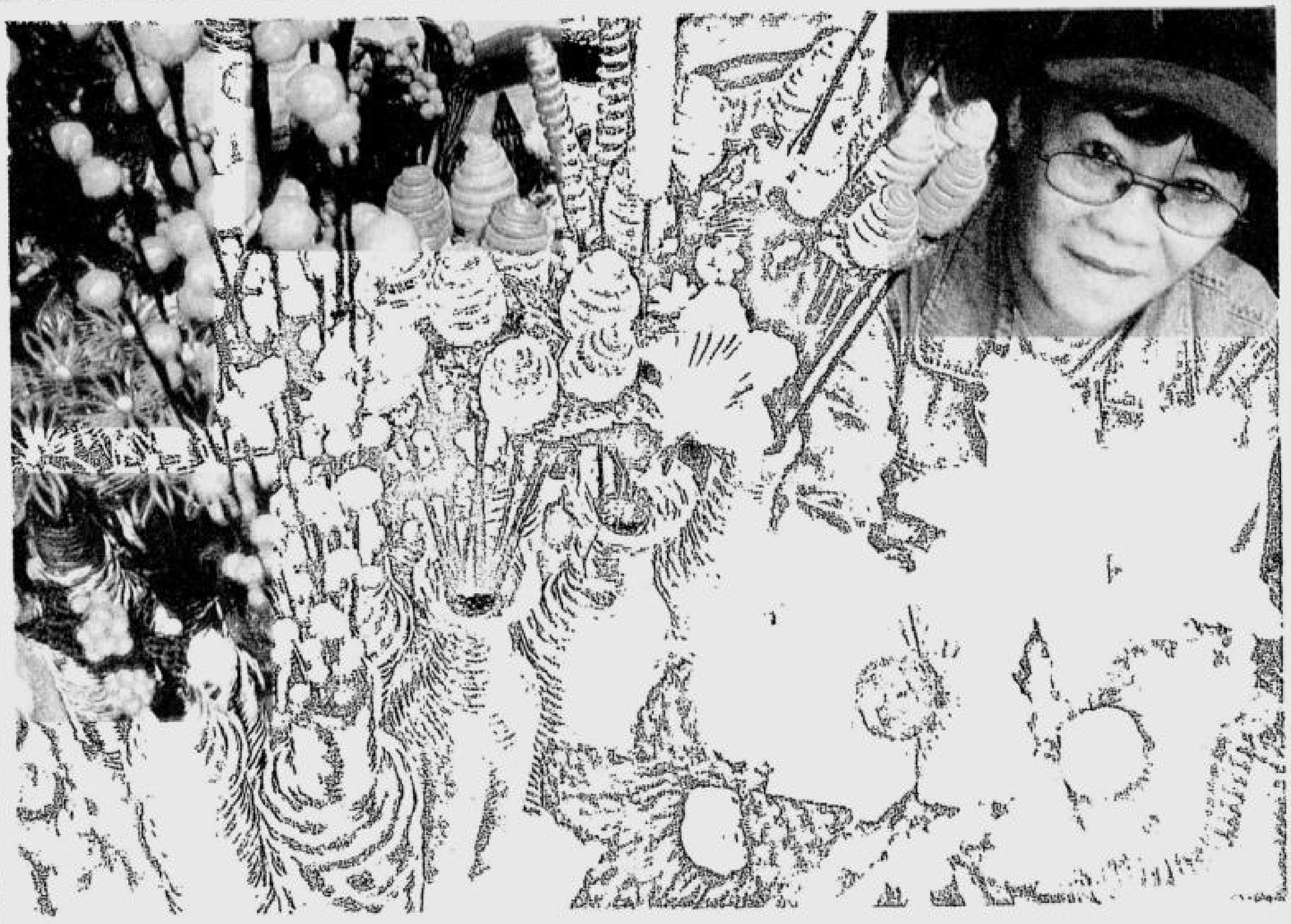
Oso said they were disheartened by reports that patients from far-flung villages could not be brought to hospitals by a town's ambulance for lack of gasoline only to see ambulances and other government vehicles in bars, beach resorts and even in cockpits.

"We hope we can help if not eradicate misuse of government vehicles. We pray that we will not become the most corrupt country in the world," said Oso.

The Philippines was ranked ninth among 159 countries in terms of graft and corruption in the 2005 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

PGII trainer Dennis Espeleta said graft and corruption is "like a cancer cell that is spreading in all parts and levels of the government."

He said the that losses due to graft and corruption, estimated at P2.65 trillion from 1977-1997, takes away much needed resources.



FROM JUNK TO DECOR
Junk art is becoming popular in Baguio City as Mila Costales would soon realize. Costales gave life back to used paper and materials to produce these colorful paper flowers that started enjoying brisk sales as the holiday season draws near.

Coal mining companies vow to be transparent

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—THE officials of the mining firm exploring coal deposits in the hinterland village of Ned in Lake Sebu town, South Cotabato have assured the host communities it would be transparent in dealing with various stakeholders.

Orestes Salon, MG Mining and Energy Corp. senior vice president for community development and external affairs, made the pronouncement during a press briefing here late last week.

Salon said MG Mining had already put in place a mechanism to address the clamor of local residents, particularly T'boli landowners.

The mining official said the company has created a technical working group (TWG) which serves as mechanism for continuous consultations and part of institution building.

Salon said the TWG members meet regularly to craft a comprehensive development plan that would protect the interest and advance the welfare of affected tribal residents.

"We've done more than enough to show respect to all stakeholders," Salon said.

Unfortunately, he said, there were other coal mining firms who first entered the area and started their coal explorations without consulting the residents.

Residents of hinterland villages in Lake Sebu have expressed their strong opposition to the ongoing exploration project of two coal mining firms in the area.

At least 100 residents, who are mostly members of the Basic Christian Community (BCC), earlier signed a petition addressed to the Department of Energy, Diocese of Marbel and the provincial government.

Two mining firms—Daguma Agro-Minerals Inc. (Dami) and the MG Mining and Energy Corp.—are conducting coal exploration in the area after the government, through the DOE, granted them Coal Operating Contract (COC).

Dami acquired its COC on July 16, 2002, covering some 7,000 hectares, while MG Mining, a subsidiary of Murphy Group of Companies, was granted a COC on Feb. 23, 2005.

Based on the study conducted by the MG Group of Companies, a copy of which was obtained by the residents, Lake Sebu has 370 million metric tons of coal reserves, said to be the largest potential coal reserve in the country. *Aquiles Z. Zonio, Inquirer Mindanao*

Blast fishing rampant in Bataan town; protests held

ABUCAY, BATAAN—ABOUT 2,000 fishermen and green mussels breeders condemned on Sunday the rampant dynamite fishing in coastal villages in this town.

Councilor Rodolfo Siongco, chair of the town council's committee on peace and order and public utility, said a group of fishermen and green mussels (*tahong*) breeders has complained against dynamite fishers from Malabon City, Parañaque and Cavite who frequent the waters of Bataan.

Wilfredo Flores, vice chair of the Samahan ng Magtatahong ng Abucay, said illegal fishers come in full gear and are equipped with high-powered firearms, modern communications equipment and speedboats whenever they fish in the province.

Willy Dacion, 49, a *tahong* breeder, said Bantay Dagat (sea watch) volunteers and local policemen are no match with illegal fishers in terms of fishing gadgets and firearms.

"In a previous instance, the police's sea borne patrol chased the illegal fishers but they failed to catch them," Dacion said.

He said illegal fishers usually come to the town's coastal villages and stay there a day. He said their activities destroy even the smallest fish and damage the town's more than 10-hectare *tahong* breeding ground.

"It would have been okay if we spend only a little for the mussels' breeding ground. Our expenses would sometimes reach P80,000," he said.

Siongco said the local government has bought a patrol boat to go after illegal fishers but the boat has broken down and needs repair.

He said fishermen have sought assistance from other government agencies to no avail.

Last year, the Bataan provincial government, through the Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, acquired several patrol boats for the towns of Orion, Pilar and Limay, where illegal fishing activities were rampant. *Greg Refraccion, Inquirer Central Luzon*

UK-based animal welfare group seeks stop to RP dog meat trade

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—AN animal welfare group has called for the strict implementation of the law to curb the illegal dog meat trade which has now become a P55 million a year industry.

The Network for Animals (NFA), a United Kingdom-based animal welfare nongovernment organization, and the Manila veterinary inspection board were alarmed that the supply and demand of dog meat in the country continued despite measures to stop the trade.

To eliminate the trade, they said efforts must be focused on the sources of the dogs.

The guns must be trained this time on traders who insisted on transporting dogs to the Cordillera where dog meat consumption is high, they said.

Melchor Alipio, NFA's representative to the Philippines, said the dog meat trade has become a multimillion-peso industry since around 1,000 dogs are being slaughtered daily for consumption in restaurants and eateries in the region.

"We must run after the dog meat traders first to weaken the source of the industry," Alipio said.

Dr. Jose Diaz, a member of Manila's veterinary inspection board, said Southern Luzon, particularly Laguna and Rizal, remained the major sources of dogs that are traded here.

Alipio and Diaz on Dec. 8 joined Benguet State University (BSU) and local officials here for the groundbreaking ceremony of a veterinary companion shelter at BSU's college of veterinary medicine.

The NFA donated $10,000 for the shelter that was intended to become a center of information for the Animal Welfare Law (Republic Act No. 8485) and a confinement facility for stray animals and dogs seized from traders.

Alipio said animal welfare groups have coordinated their efforts with lawmen to concentrate on the arrest of dog traders from Southern Luzon.

He said records of dogs seized from traders showed that five shipments of live dogs are transported daily to Baguio City and Benguet alone while at least 600 dogs are taken to the Ilocos and Cagayan Valley.

"Based on our experience in Manila, a shipment contains 150 to 300 live dogs," Diaz said.

Diaz and Alipio said dog meat traders must be identified and immediately placed on a watch list so that they would be immediately arrested when they transport dogs again.

Alipio said since the passage of the Animal Welfare Law in 1998, efforts were exerted to bring traders behind bars but the appetite for dog meat in the region had kept the industry alive. *Delmar Cariño, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

212 cases of abuse of housemaids by employers listed in W. Visayas

By David Israel Sinay
Inquirer Visayas

ILOILO CITY—AT LEAST 212 cases of abuses perpetrated by employers against their house helps in Western Visayas were recorded from 2004 to 2006, according to data collated by a foreign-funded foundation here.

The house helps were either physically or emotionally battered, raped or subjected to lascivious acts, revealed Dzen Patriarca, regional social worker of the Visayan Forum Foundation (VFF).

Patriarca made the disclosure Thursday when United States Deputy Chief of Mission Paul Jones visited VFF, which has a partnership with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The foundation's thrust is combating human trafficking. It has a program for migrant working children, and the Kasambahay program for house helps.

VFF, which was established in 1991, set up an office in Western Visayas in 2004 to initiate its programs on child domestic workers, focusing on house maids, laundrywomen and caregivers.

Patriarca said the data on abused house helps was collated by VFF under its Kasambahay Program (coined from *kasama sa bahay* or house companion), which provides specialized crisis services such as temporary shelter, counseling and medico-legal services to abused domestic workers.

"We house them. We provide them with educational assistance, school supplies, financial assistance, temporary shelter and counseling," said VFF regional coordinator Salvador Acupan.

Acupan said the main focus of the foundation is to extend services to children below 18 years old, in coordination with the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Jones said the United States was proud of its partnership with the VFF, describing the foundation as "a model for its work in antihuman trafficking."

Jones also lauded VFF for "its cooperation with government agencies." Among others, the foundation has linked up with the Philippine Ports Authority Gender and Development Program.

The VFF works mainly for the welfare of marginalized migrants, especially those working in the invisible and informal sectors like domestic workers and trafficked women and children.

Patriarca, however, said most of the victims of human trafficking had refused to file charges against their abusers because the victims "just want to move on with their lives."

Bayan Muna says break-in at office work of military

COTABATO CITY—MILITANT group Bayan Muna has complained that its office in Midsayap, North Cotabato, had been ransacked by suspected military men in civilian clothes on Sunday dawn.

"We have a strong hunch that the military was responsible in the break-in that resulted in the disappearance of one computer unit (CPU), diskettes and other documents," said Bayan Muna Midsayap chapter spokesperson Bebiano Gabo.

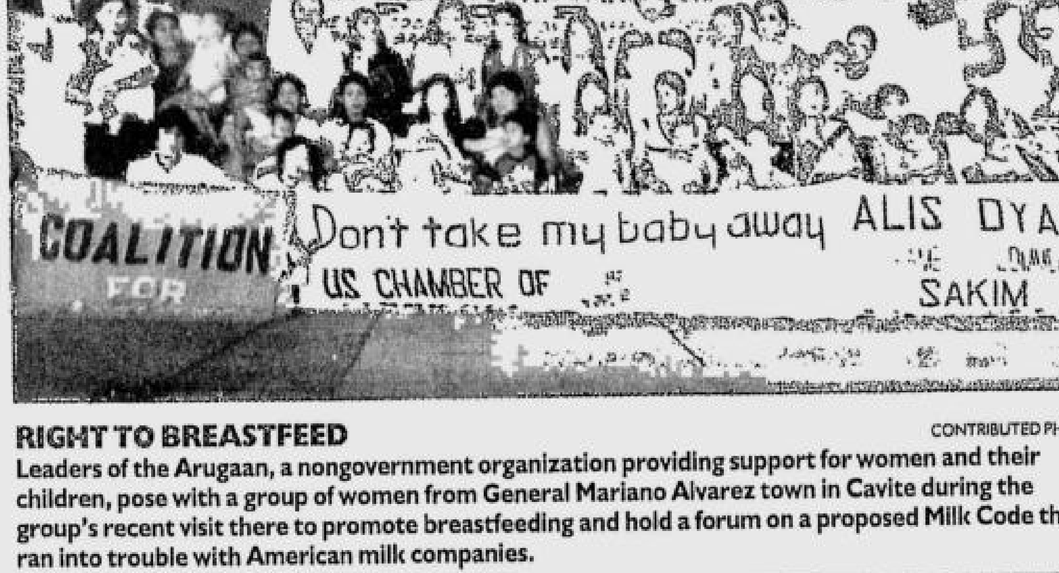
Gabo said the people that took the missing items were not robbers. "They belong to the intelligence group of the AFP that is currently conducting surveillance among suspected groups critical to the Arroyo administration."

He said the office-residence of Bayan Muna in Midsayap was without occupants on Dec. 9 as they were in Kidapawan City attending an international human rights day celebration.

"When we returned the following day, that's when we discovered that our computer room was forcibly opened," he said.

Gabo said that a few days before the break-in, suspicious-looking individuals were seen around the neighborhood trying to extract information about the group's activities.

"We suspect, they were military assets or government agents," he said. *Charlie C. Señase, Inquirer Mindanao*



RIGHT TO BREASTFEED CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Leaders of the Arugaan, a nongovernment organization providing support for women and their children, pose with a group of women from General Mariano Alvarez town in Cavite during the group's recent visit there to promote breastfeeding and hold a forum on a proposed Milk Code that ran into trouble with American milk companies.

Power restoration in typhoon-hit areas under way

By Abigail L. Ho

POWER RESTORATION IN TYphoon-ravaged areas of Samar, Leyte and Panay has started over the weekend, although the National Transmission Corp. (Transco) has yet to assess the full extent of damage wrought by Typhoon "Seniang."

Lorrymir Adasa, Transco vice president for Visayas and Mindanao, said the state firm had already energized the Panitan-Roxas, Panitan-Mianay, and Mianay-Dao 69-kilovolt (kV) lines in Panay, and the Babatngon-Tacloban 69-kV line in Leyte.

Power has likewise been restored in Cebu, with the repair of the Compostela-Medelin 69-kV line.

Due to Seniang's strong winds and heavy rains, Transco linemen have not been able to make much headway in their power restoration efforts in Samar, Panay and Leyte.

Samar has remained almost entirely without power, while a few parts of Panay and Leyte have yet to get their power supplies back.

In locations where some of Transco's steel towers and wooden poles were damaged, the state firm has deployed emergency restoration structures (ERS), or temporary towers that can be used while waiting for the permanent steel towers and wooden poles to be set up.

While steel towers could take around six months to put up, the ERS could be installed in less than a week.

Transco will have to shell out almost P900 million to repair and replace the steel towers, transmission lines and wooden poles that had been damaged by Supertyphoon "Reming" around two weeks ago.

Reming toppled 89 steel towers and left 27 more either bent or broken in half when it wrought havoc on Bicol and other Southern Luzon provinces.

Reming also damaged 887 wooden poles and various substation facilities and equipment, mostly in Bicol.

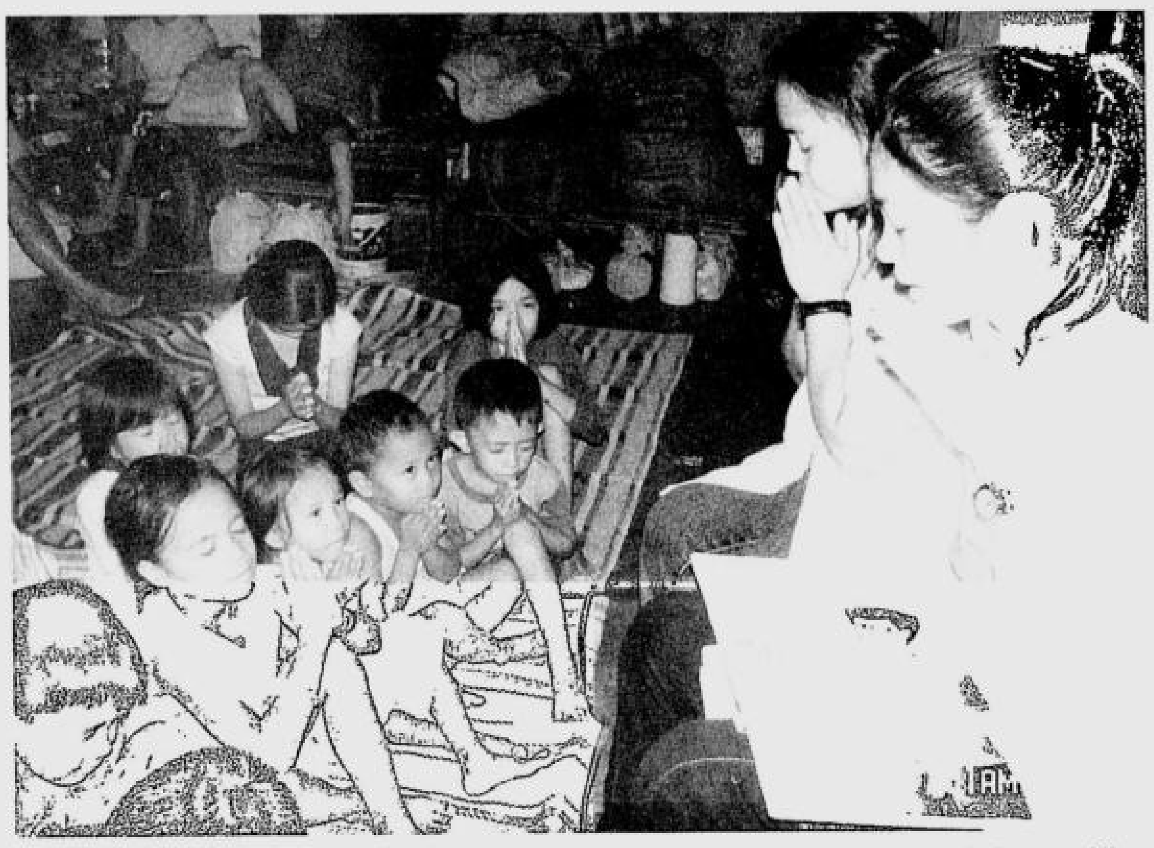
The amount earmarked for supertyphoon-related repairs excluded the P485 million that Transco would have to spend to replace the 42 steel towers that Supertyphoon "Milenyo" had destroyed in late September.

Most of these were also in Bicol.

DOMINADOR Lobos, 76, crosses muddy water that used to be street after surviving the deadly mudflow that destroyed his house in Cullat village, Albay.
AFP

ANIMALS are as valuable as any piece of property for these residents of Busay in Albay.
AP

Hope is message at shelter for typhoon victims



BEAUTY QUEEN and TV host Miriam Quiambao leads a prayer at an evacuation center in Daraga, Albay.
DOMINIQUE TABORA/CONTRIBUTOR

NAGA CITY—AMID THE DEVastation brought by Supertyphoon "Reming," Miriam Quiambao, 1999 Miss Universe first runnerup, sees hope for the children housed in an evacuation center in Busay, Daraga, Albay, which she visited on Saturday morning.

Quiambao said she was deeply touched while leading the children in prayer even as rains were pouring hard and everyone was silently fearing that another mudslide could occur that day in the devastated village.

"The rains just stopped after we prayed," she said, noting that the moment became special for her.

Quiambao, an advocate of children's rights and welfare under the program of World Vision, a nongovernment organization involved in child rights and welfare protection, said the experience provided some insights on how children's innocence could shield them from painful realities.

"It's amazing to see their (children's) innocence that has made them carefree and be what they are, even amid the disaster," she said.

Quiambao said that while with the children in the evacuation center, she told them a story about creation through a character named Bunsoy, who was enlightened by so many things God made for mankind.

She said that Bunsoy's story was about hope in which no matter how hard times are and how deprived one may be, there's always something in God's creation that can be useful and beneficial for mankind.

"Our vision for every child, life's in all its fullness, our prayer for every heart, this will make it so," Quiambao said, quoting the World Vision's goal.

She said she became a volunteer of the World Vision from 2001-2004 but took a leave when she married.

In April, she returned to her work as spokesperson for the organization's missions.

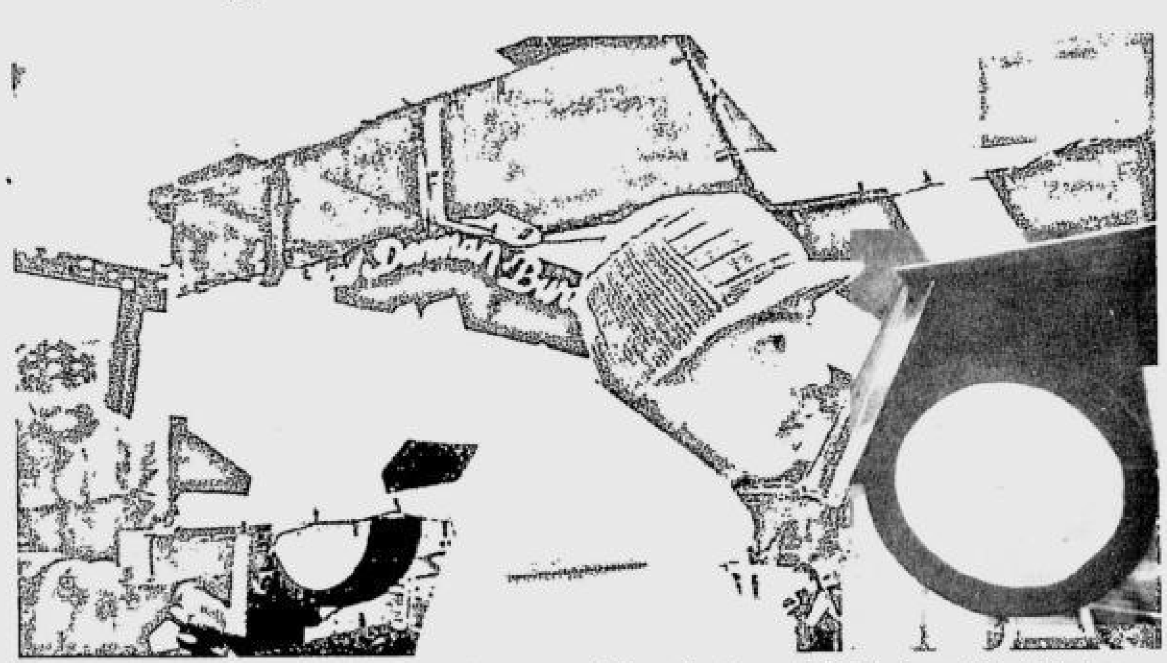
Quiambao said that since her college days, she had been into outreach work, visiting convicts on death row—an undertaking that spurred her into continuing her volunteer work.

The beauty queen-turned-television host arrived from Alaska on Friday, when she was asked to go with the World Vision's team to visit the devastated areas in Albay and Camarines Sur.

Although she was still experiencing jet lag, Quiambao flew to Bicol on Saturday morning. She said she was horrified to see the vast destruction as the plane was preparing to land at the airport in Legazpi. *Juan Escandor Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon*

Rains won't dampen Fil-Ams' lantern festival in San Francisco

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon



A FIL-AM in San Francisco gets closer to a lantern made into the shape of a Philippine public utility jeep.
TONETTE OREJAS/INQUIRER CENTRAL LUZON

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA—Rains whipped up by a storm on Saturday (Sunday in Manila) failed to stop hundreds of Filipino-Americans in this tourist city and the Bay Area communities from celebrating the 4th Annual Parol (lantern) Festival they dedicated to the centennial of Filipino migration to the United States.

In true display of the Filipinos' sense of optimism, they forego with the parade of not less than 2,500 lanterns, replacing the much-awaited spectacle with an instant exhibit and indoor program that would all have been done on Market Street and ended at the Yerba Buena Gardens.

Instead, they crowded at their virtual "poblacion," the Bayanihan Center, at 6th Street and Mission, filling up the first floor.

This got the hosts, Ron Muriera and Odette Keeley, worried, issuing reminders now and then to the 1,000 or so audience to leave spaces for exits in case of emergencies.

More than 1,000 more, for lack of space, milled outside, coming only when the crowd inside thinned out.

Handmade lanterns, ranging from one foot to eight feet in sizes and coming in conservative and gregarious designs, shapes and colors, were crammed into every nook, wall and ceiling of the center.

Fr. Charles Puthota of St. Patrick's Church did not miss out the obvious. "The spirit is not dampened," he said as he led the opening prayers.

To Erwin Bonilla, the lanterns were not only about Pasko (Christmas), the kind that Filipinos have in the Philippines.

To this 27-year-old man uprooted from Laguna to San Francisco when he was only three years old, the lanterns "bring out our Filipino heritage while we integrate to American society or blend in a multi-cultural setting as San Francisco."

If one was oblivious to the city, Remegia Bongabong, 80, said one would have thought everything was actually happening in the Philippines. "*Para kang nasa Pilipinas*," Bongabong, who is from Davao, told the INQUIRER.

The Likha Rondalla played folk songs. The Likha Folkloric Dance Troupe performed the "Sayaw ng Parol," complete with *baro't saya*. Children sang "Pasko! Pasko!"

Bongabong, along with wives and widows of World War II veterans in the Veterans Equity Center, dished out "Ang Pasko ay Sumapit."

Pandesal and *sopas* (milk soup with chicken and noodles) were served. Two or perhaps three generations of Filipinos gathered, and many looked very Pinoy.

Some hang around at the center's Arkipelago Bookstore that sold Filipino titles. And with the many lanterns around, including authentic ones from the Philippine lantern capital of San Fernando in Pampanga, the event seemed not to be held overseas.

What gave them out was their accent, the names of the organizations they represented. The localness is perhaps closely approximated because the *parol* "really defines the Filipino identity," according to MC Canlas, founding director of the festival organized by the Filipino-American Development Foundation.

That was in terms of creativity, *bayanihan* (working together) and sense of community, he explained before the event. Lantern-making, as Canlas knew it in his village in San Fernando, practiced all those elements.

Chinese but Cuba-born Leonides Jong said lantern workshops held weeks before the parade helped her reach out to fellow Asians in this city.

Stepping into one of the two halls where the lanterns were hastily put on display, Remedios Riborozo, 76, said: "Nice! I have never seen such beautiful lanterns."

From 1960 until 1994, this native of Cagayan Valley taught physics, geometry and algebra in Honolulu, Hawaii. She recently settled in San Francisco because, she said, "prices are cheaper here."

"I kind of have a sense of longing for the Philippines," she said, her eyes trained on lanterns from San Fernando, especially brought here by a delegation led by Councilor Alex Patiu.

Riborozo last went home in 2004, tagging along two US-born daughters who have never visited their mother's birthplace.

To John Flordelis, a member of the Philippine Scouts contingent that served in Okinawa, Japan, in 1948, the *parols* made him busy and boosted his hope.

Together with war vets with pending claims for pension, he joined lantern-making workshops and contributed his pieces to the Cenon Kip Seniors Center.

The night was part of a yearlong tribute to the sacadas who arrived in Hawaii in wintry December 1906, according to Marivic Bamba, executive chair of the Centennial Commemoration Committee in the Bay Area.

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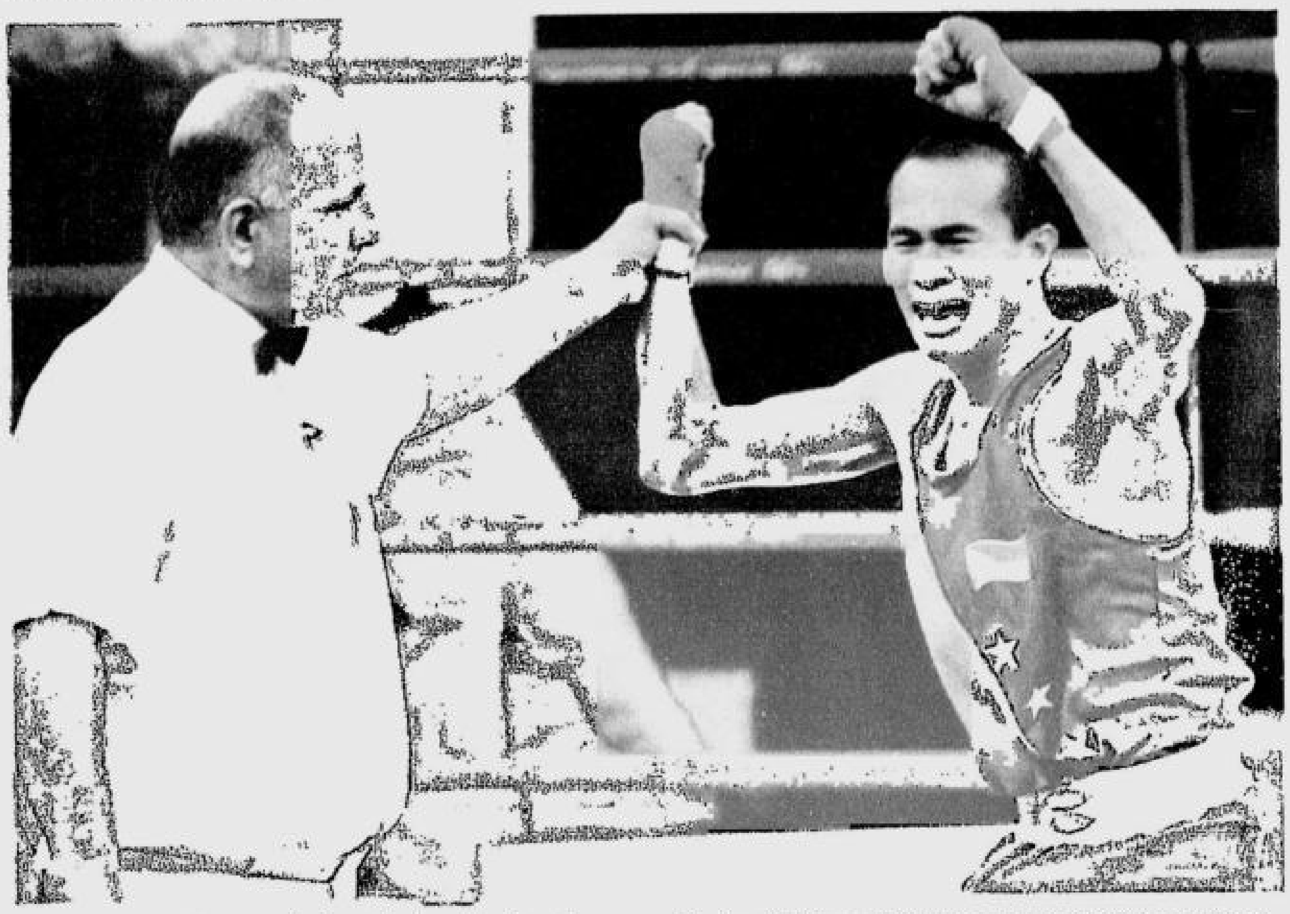

JOAN TIPON cries out as judges declare him the winner over Thailand's Worapoj Petchkoom in their 54 kg semifinal match in boxing at the Aspire, Sports City, Doha, Qatar.

LYN RILLON

De Luna, Gabica assure RP of 1st gold in billiards

By Ted S. Melendres, *Sports Editor*

DOHA, QATAR—THE LONG WAIT IS OVER AND IT TOOK TWO Filipinos to make sure the prize doesn't get away this time.

World Pool quarterfinalist Jeffrey De Luna and Antonio Gabica barged into the finals of the 9-ball event in masterly fashion last night and assured the Philippines of its first gold medal—and a fourth silver in the 15th Asian Games here.

De Luna, the brightest rising star of Philippine pool, upset former world champion Yang Ching-shun of Chinese Taipei, 11-7, before the more experienced Gabica made short work of the overmatched Jeoung Young-hwa of South Korea, 11-5.

De Luna and Gabica, already the silver medalist in 8-ball, set up a final match later last night, but the outcome was less important than the fact the winner will be a Filipino.

"I was confident I could beat him (Jeoung)," said the 34-year-old Gabica. "After scoring five golden breaks and winning against my semifinal opponent (China's Xu Meng), there was no pressure at all against the Korean."

Iris Ranola was battling for the bronze medal in women's 9-ball singles at press time after dropping a 7-4 decision to Malaysia's Esther Kwan Suet Yee in the semifinals.

De Luna earlier nipped Japan's Yukio Akagariyama, 11-10, while Gabica downed China's Xu Meng, 11-8, to barge into the semifinals.

On a day Michael Bibat came from behind to pull off a stunning bronze-medal finish in men's individual golf and boxer Joan Tipon upset his Thai foe to reach the finals in the men's bantamweight class, the Filipinos's tenacity and resolve to land its first gold was amply rewarded.

Cecil Mamiit pulled the rug from under fourth seed Wang Yeu-Tzuoo of Chinese Taipei, 2-6, 6-2, 6-2, in men's singles and his partnership with fellow Fil-American Eric Taino rallied past the Uzbek pair of Murad Inoyatov and Denis Istomin, 3-6, 7-6 (7-5), 7-6, in doubles as the Filipinos also clinched berths in tennis' medal rounds.

But light flyweight Godfrey Castro had to settle for the bronze when he was halted by a vastly superior Suban Pannon via an RSC-Os (referee stops contest-outscored) 1 minute and 46 seconds into the third round.

Lightweight Genebert Basadre also ended up with a bronze after taking a 29-18 loss from China's Hu Qiomg.

Bibat birdied the first two holes in the back nine to catch a Singaporean and a South Korean ace in third place and then held on to bag the bronze medal.

The 5-foot-11, 22-year-old Bibat closed out with a two-under-par 70 for a 72-hole total of 279, nine under par over the 7,181-yard Doha Golf Club and just three shots off winner Kim Kyung-tae of South Korea and two behind silver medalist Pan Cheng-tsung of Chinese Taipei.

A five-under 67 in the third round strengthened Bibat's bid for a medal and injected confidence in an RP team that could not move out of fifth place, its final placing in team play.

Bibat actually ended up tied for third with Singapore's Choo Tze-huang and South Korea's Kim Do-hoon Sr. but clinched the bronze with the better back nine score. The Filipino had a 34 while Choo and Kim matched 36s.

"I was surprised when I found out that I had won the bronze because four golfers were at nine under par at some point," said Bibat. "I'm very pleased to win the bronze—for me, it's like the gold medal."

Bibat had to wait for about an hour to find out if he had clinched a medal as tournament officials reviewed scores and interviewed flight rules men.

"The last round was very fruitful for me," he said. "I did not give up fighting."

Tipon won by superiority over Thailand's Worapoj Petchkoom after both fighters had ended their fight tied at 13-13. The 24-year-old Filipino lost the first round, 2-4, took the next two, 3-1 and 4-3, and dropped the last, 4-5.

Tipon became the second RP pug to land into the finals after flyweight Violito Payla.

"This (win) is for Godfrey and the Philippines," said Tipon, after scoring the closest victory so far in boxing. "This win is so important to me."

Castro trailed Pannon, 20-40, when the referee stepped in to halt the fight. The Thai took the first two rounds by scores of 11-7 and 15-7 and then dominated the suddenly tame Castro, 14-6, before the stoppage.

Mamiit, last year's Southeast Asian Games singles gold medalist, guns for at least the silver medal when he battles the South Korean top seed Lee in the semifinals Tuesday at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Center.

The sixth-seeded Mamiit will be the underdog when he battles Lee, the only South Korean in history to reach the finals of an Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) event. The Korean lost to Andy Roddick in the finals of the 2001 Houston Open.

The vanguard of the RP tennis squad enjoyed edges in service winners, 14-11, and first-serve percentage, 68-58, and converted six break points compared to Wang's three.

"Hell of a match," said the 29-year-old Mamiit after the 1-hour and 57-minute encounter. "The key was never to give up, and the crowd helped me a lot today. I just had to keep going."

He said anything is possible in the medal round.

"It will be tough and I'll be the underdog [against Lee]."

Gene Bondoc finally counted with a 72 and Jay Bayron returned a 74 as the RP men's squad wound up fifth in team play with 857, 21 shots off the winning Koreans (836). India had 849 for the silver and Chinese Taipei 850 for the bronze.

Dottie Ardina closed out with a one-under 72 and wound up with a 290 total, good for 13th place in women's play and four in front of Cyna Rodriguez, who had 294 after a 74. The Filipinas also finished fifth in team play with 569.

South Korea took the gold with 534, Japan the silver with 547 and Chinese Taipei the bronze with 566.

In equestrian, Danielle Cojuangco and Juan Ramon Lanza settled for joint 12th place in the second qualifier in individual jumping with eight penalties each.

Toni Leviste was in a six-way logjam for 20th with 12 while Paola Zobel lay in 45th place with 51.

The wushu bets encountered strong opposition in the sport's first-day of action. Janice Sy Hung scored 9.48 points in the women's taijiquan (shadow boxing) and lay in 10th place.

Malaysia's Chai Fong Ying led the field with 9.71 followed by Japan's Ai Miyaoka (9.66) and another Malaysian, Ng Shin Yii (9.56).

Willy Wang and Pedro Quina were tied in eighth place in the men's nanquan (southern fist) event with 9.39. China's Wu Caibo led the table with 9.82 followed by Vietnam's Pham Quoc Khanh (9.74) and South Korea's Lee Seung-kuen (9.70).

15TH ASIAN GAMES
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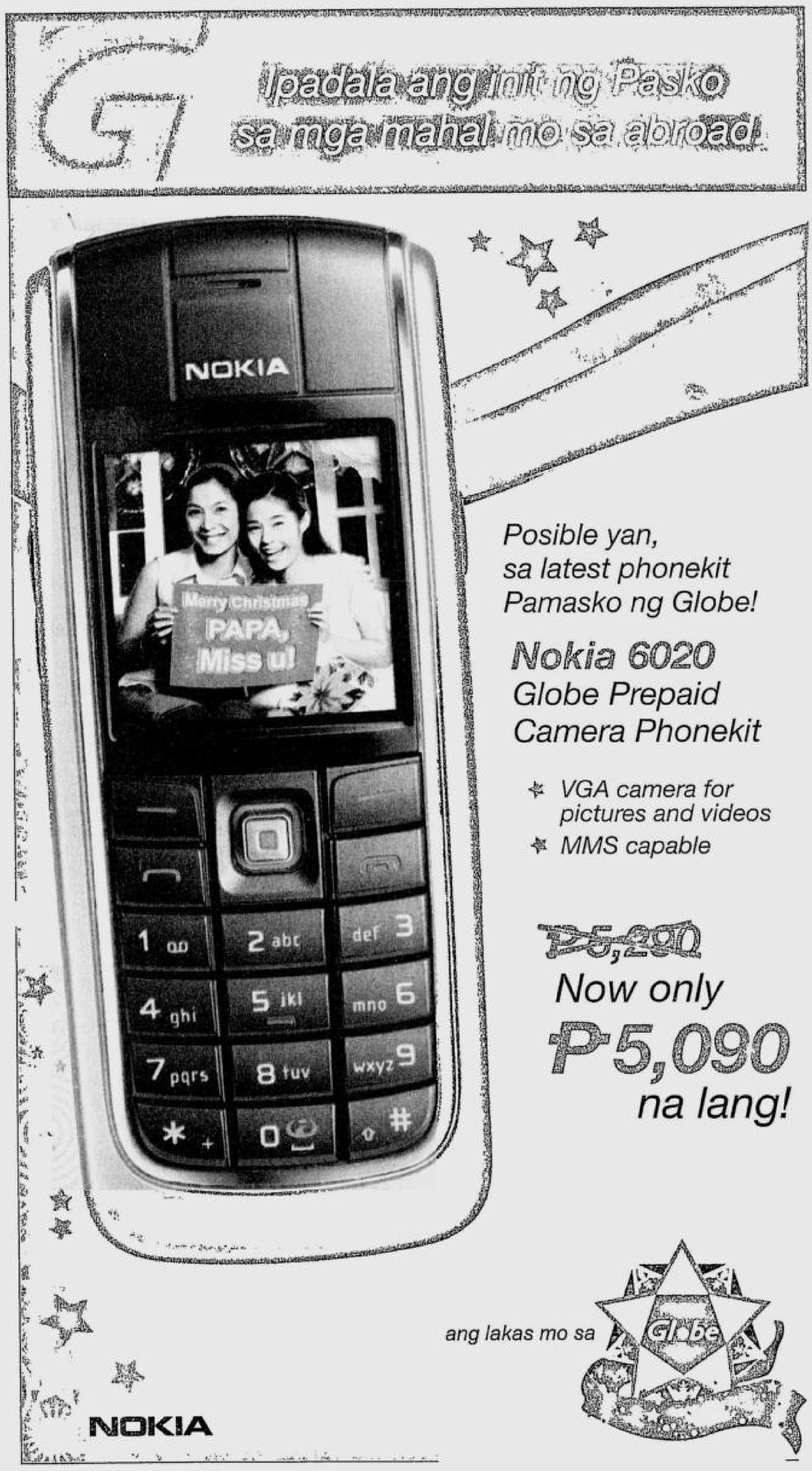
More Sports on A25 to A28



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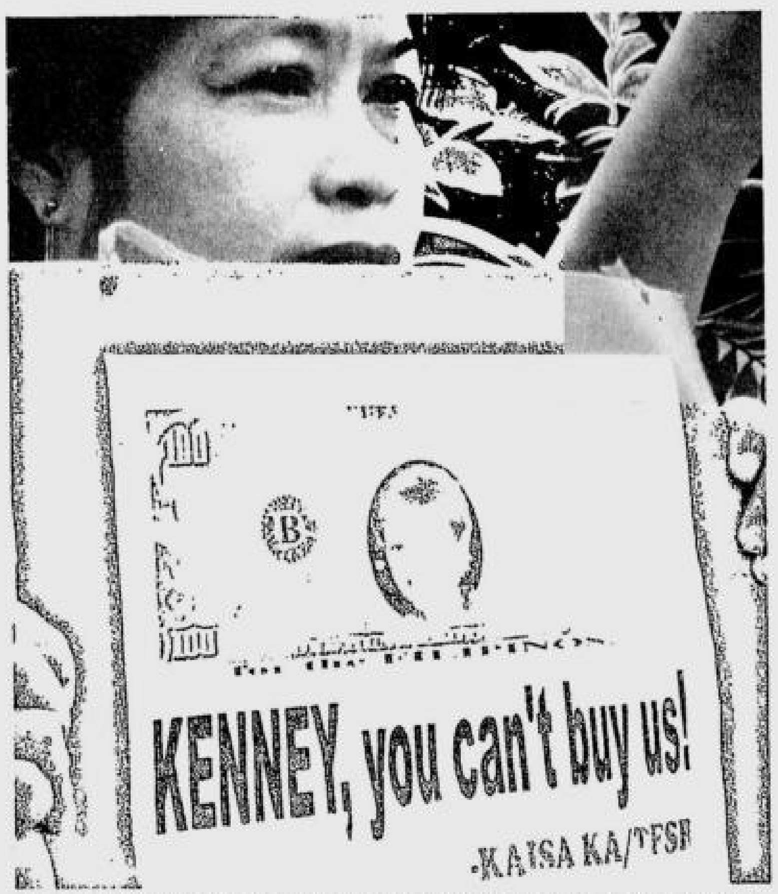
Smith remains under detention in Makati jail

With new issues raised, judge asks for more time


KENNEY, you can't buy us!
-KAISA KA/TFSF

A PROTESTER holds up a placard critical of US Ambassador Kristie Kenney who has signed an agreement with Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez for the return of Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith, who has been convicted for rape, to US custody. NIÑO JESUS ORBETA

By Tarra V. Quismundo

LANCE CPL. DANIEL SMITH, THE AMERICAN soldier convicted for raping a Filipino woman a week ago, remained inside the Makati City Jail (MCJ) yesterday as Regional Trial Court Judge Benjamin Pozon asked for more time to decide on a plea that the Marine be returned to the US Embassy's custody pending an appeal filed by his lawyers.

Pozon told prosecution and defense lawyers that he would need more time to rule on the matter as "additional issues and arguments" were raised in yesterday's hearing.

"I thought the court could already make a ruling on the appeal today, but because of the arguments in open court, and some other important issues that cropped up, I will not issue a resolution today. I will need more time to study this," the judge said.

Pozon, however, assured private prosecutors, defense lawyers and representatives from the justice and foreign affairs departments that "the court believes it has sufficient basis to already decide on the issue."

He also rejected the suggestion of private prosecutors Evalyn Ursua and Rene Saguisag to invite *amici curae* or friends of the court—including deans of law schools, constitutionalists and other legal luminaries—to appear before him to air their opinion on the matter.

"There is no need for the appointment of friends of the court in resolving the issue ... The motion for reconsideration is therefore submitted for resolution. The court regrets that it cannot decide on the motion today," Pozon said, as US Embassy representatives and Smith's lawyers looked dismayed.

Private prosecutors said in open court that the judge "should not be rushed" into resolving the issue, as his decision is "a case of first impression" and would be used as a precedent in deciding future legal questions on the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA).

Smith's lawyer, Jose Justiniano, had asked the court last Tuesday to recall its order committing the 21-year-old soldier to the MCJ and return him to US custody pending his appeal, pursuant to provisions of the VFA.

Upon finding Smith guilty of raping "Nicole" last week, Pozon ordered his detention at the MCJ pending an agreement between the Philippine and US governments on

SMITH/ A22

'No mechanism to check on Smith at US Embassy'

By Volt Contreras

SHOULD THE COURT APPROVE the return of Subic rape convict Lance Cpl. Daniel Smith to US custody, it is not clear how the Philippine government could check on the soldier pending his appeal, officials conceded yesterday.

Undersecretary Zosimo Paredes, executive director of the Presidential Commission on the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement (VFACom), said he sensed this "apprehension" on the part of Makati City Judge Benjamin Pozon who asked for more time to decide on the matter.

"There is no hard-and-fast rule or mechanism to check (on Smith)," said Paredes who, during the marathon trial of Smith and his three coaccused, led two "unannounced" visits of the VFACom to the US Embassy to check on their condition.

Paredes explained that while his visits were not covered by any VFA provision, "it is presupposed that we have a right to check."

Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Rafael Seguis said the matter of checking on Smith was not covered by the agreement between the embassy and the justice department on his return to American custody.

He said the US Embassy had earlier "committed they will not remove" Smith from confinement inside the mission and that the Philippine side accepted this assurance "in the spirit of our cooperation and friendship."

Outside the courtroom, about 50 militant supporters of "Nicole" called for the American to do time in a local prison.

METROBRIEFS

Fake watches seized in Quiapo

AGENTS of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) seized P3.5 million worth of counterfeit watches during a raid in Quiapo, Manila last week. Bureau operatives conducted the raid upon the request of the local distributors of designer watches Tag Heuer and Louis Vuitton, according to NBI Intellectual Property Rights Division chief Jose Justo Yap. The NBI raided the establishments allegedly owned by Lina and Pan Co, James Cu, Samuel Vega Hildore, Lando Shiong and Leo Ang on Palanca and Carriedo Streets in Quiapo last Dec. 7. The owners now face charges for violation of trademark infringement and unfair competition, Yap said.

The NBI agents seized 1,653 pieces of fake Tag Heuer and 1,736 counterfeit Louis Vuitton watches worth P3.5 million from the establishments. Yap said the operatives conducted the raid after obtaining search warrants from Manila Regional Trial Court Executive Judge Reynaldo Ros

Margaux C. Ortiz

Working permits for men, too

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

TALK ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY. The Marikina City Council has already updated a 13-year-old ordinance requiring working permits for those working as "hospitality girls" in the city.

This time, the men are also included, Vice Mayor Marion Andres told the INQUIRER.

The ordinance approved two weeks ago now talks about requiring permits for all "hospitality workers"—a term which refers to those working in "night clubs, cocktail lounges, massage clinics, bars and other similar establishments."

"This is for their protection and for the protection of the public as well," Andres added. Under the new ordinance, hospitality workers are required to get working permits from the city business permits and licensing office.

But before they can be issued one, they will need clearances from the police, the barangay and the health department as well as official copies of their birth certificate to make sure no minor is issued a permit. Those found working without permits will be fined from P1,000 to P2,000 apart from rendering community work for four to eight hours.

Studes back to school after chemical spill case

By Tarra V. Quismundo

IT LOOKED LIKE THE FIRST day of school all over again at San Isidro National High School in Makati City yesterday, as students returned to their classes following a two-week unscheduled break.

A chemical spill occurred inside the school laboratory on Nov. 26, forcing the suspension of classes to allow a cleanup crew to decontaminate the school and its premises.

"The students were very excited. The opening went well. There were some absences, though that's really normal, but students already had classes as early as 6:30 a.m.," said Makati school division superintendent Elena Ruiz.

Classes at the four-story high school—located at the corner of Borneo and P. Binay Streets—are held in two shifts. Half of the student population attend classes from 6:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., and the remaining half, from 1 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

The school's fourth floor, where the laboratory is located, will remain closed until Dec. 30. Ruiz said the laboratory would be relocated and redesigned to prevent a similar incident in the future.

"We learned a lot from this incident. School safety is very important. You really have to be careful about the specs (specifications) of structures. We have to be more preventive than reactive," she added.

Classes at San Isidro would be held until Dec. 22 before students go on a holiday break until Jan. 2.

But starting this week, the students will have attend the first of eight makeup classes to be held every Saturday to allow them to catch up on missed lessons.

A TEACHER at the San Isidro National High School in Makati City greets her students after classes resumed yesterday. The school was closed for two weeks following a chemical spill incident inside its science laboratory. REM ZAMORA

"Classes will be at a normal pace but they have to have Saturday classes until they complete the eight days. They will begin this December, throughout January, and maybe attend three Saturday classes in February," Ruiz said.

Following the chemical spill incident at San Isidro, the Makati school division will begin a safety program for students, teachers and the nonteaching staff of the city's 36 public schools and several private schools.

"All dwellers inside the school would undergo the program for them to be trained on safety standards. We will get the assistance of experts this time and we will integrate the program into the curriculum," said Ruiz, adding that the safety and accident prevention program should be enforced and followed nationwide.

During yesterday's reopening, the administration and students of San Isidro thanked the team of emergency workers, toxicology experts and police that worked together to decontaminate the school and assess chemical levels inside the campus.

Among the agencies that took part in the cleanup and decontamination procedure were the Makati and Pasay Rescue teams, the Bureau of Fire Protection Special Rescue Unit, the Makati Police Station, the Department of Health, the labor department's Occupational Safety and Health Center, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources and Dr. Irma Macalinao, a toxicology expert from the University of the Philippines College of Medicine.

It took emergency workers about a week to remove the spilled chemicals and other debris inside the laboratory. All four floors of the school were also cleared of contaminants. The city government hired a private firm to dispose of the 1,855 kilos of chemical waste that were collected inside San Isidro.

San Juan fire kills 1; blaze traced to 'overused' fan

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

FIRE OFFICIALS ARE WARNING residents against using appliances round the clock, especially this holiday season.

Building owners should also see to it that all office equipment with electrical connections are unplugged after office hours.

According to San Juan Fire investigation chief Chandler Arcadio, appliances that overheat could easily trigger fires.

"Many of the fires reported in Metro Manila are electricity-related," he told the INQUIRER yesterday.

He said house and building owners should particularly be careful about using electric fans, which can easily overheat if used for long periods of time.

Arcadio warned residents that turning off an electric fan is not enough. The plug should also be removed from the socket.

"The current still flows into the motor as long as the electric fan is plugged in," he explained.

Last Saturday, a small fire broke out inside a two-story house in Barangay Batis, San Juan.

Casualty

Arcadio said a ceiling fan triggered the fire. Although it lasted for less than an hour, the blaze killed a 34-year-old woman who tried to save the documents of her Italian employer.

The fire broke out at 2:25 a.m.

Arcadio said victim Nora Cebu went back to the upper floor of the house she had been renting, possibly to save work-related documents.

Cebu worked for Franco Martillote, 46, who owns a shop selling native products.

Investigators had talked to Martillote but he could not tell which documents Cebu had wanted to save.

"We have been telling building owners and employees during our seminars before not to return to a burning structure," Arcadio said.

The fire was put out at 3:02 a.m.

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INC brings GMA to the ground

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO is not so insensitive, after all.

For a while many people thought GMA was already stricken with hubris or excessive arrogance. She didn't seem to care what the media and the public said or thought about her action.

The issue of Charter change, opposed by the majority of the population, was being rammed down the people's throat by the House of Representatives upon instructions from the President.

No matter how loud the citizenry shouted in opposition, GMA would not budge. She would not even listen to the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) that saved her neck at the height of the "Hello Garci" scandal.

It took the influential Iglesia ni Cristo (INC) to bring her down to the ground. GMA said she no longer supported Chacha after INC leaders talked to her and put sense into her head.

Now we, the citizenry, know where to run to the next time our national leadership becomes oppressive and arrogant again.

* * *

The President couldn't afford to turn down the INC when it asked her to drop Cha-cha since the citizenry didn't like it.

The influential religious sect warned her of the citizenry's outrage should she push through with her plan to amend the Constitution through a constituent assembly.

She's trying to court the INC that votes as one during election. Her possible senatorial candidates are down in the ratings game.

It's another story if the INC will support all her candidates in the national elections next year even if she accommodates its request.

* * *

GMA and her cohorts in Congress should face up to the reality that the citizenry doesn't want Charter change if it means scrapping the presidential form in favor of the parliamentary system of government.

People want to elect their national leaders—president, vice president and senators. They don't want to delegate the authority of selecting the national leadership to the parliament.

* * *

Supertyphoon "Reming" showed us the need for immediate aid to calamity victims. The government was caught off-guard, leaving it to private individuals and groups to send relief goods to typhoon victims.

Among the first to respond to the call for help for the Bicol calamity victims was former Mayor Lilia "Baby" Pineda of Lubao, Pampanga. (Yes, she's the wife of suspected "jueteng" lord Bong Pineda).

I missed Pineda by a day in Legazpi City. She had left when I arrived Wednesday afternoon. She arrived in Legazpi City Saturday, Dec. 2, with eight truckloads of relief goods from her hometown in Lubao, Pampanga two days after Reming left.

* * *

Our Air Force, although composed of some of the world's best pilots and an efficient and dedicated ground crew, is not up to the job of immediately transporting goods and medicines to calamity areas. The Air Force has only three C-130 aircraft and only a handful of helicopters.

The Air Force couldn't carry relief goods to Reming victims in bulk because it lacks C-130 transport planes.

Lt. Gen. Jose L. Reyes, Air Force chief, said the bare minimum number of aircraft for the Air Force to be able to do its mercy mission efficiently is eight C-130 planes and 130 choppers. The Air Force has only 20 helicopters.

Since we're a disaster-prone country, we need an Air Force that can respond immediately to deliver relief goods or pluck out people in distress.

Arraignment of stude linked to poisoning case reset anew

By DJ Yap

THE ARRAIGNMENT OF ONE OF TWO accused students in the controversial poisoning incident at the Philippine Science High School was postponed again yesterday and reset to February.

Judge Ma. Lourdes Giron of the Quezon City Regional Trial Court Branch 102 allowed the deferment of the proceedings, following a motion by the respondent. She rescheduled the arraignment on Feb. 12.

Giron, however, said this was the last time she was resetting the arraignment for the frustrated murder charges, following two previous postponements, according to private prosecutor Eugenio Villareal, who expressed disappointment over the delay.

The court earlier denied the respondent's motion for consideration questioning its order dismissing his petition to defer the proceedings, while the prosecutor's office acts on another motion questioning the finding of probable cause, Villareal said.

Along with another student, the respondent, a minor, stands accused of pouring a vial of mercurous nitrate into a water jug, from which a classmate, Marie Angelynne Fabro, drank, causing her to sustain severe internal injuries and leaving her hospitalized for several days.

As a result of the poisoning, she had to undergo several dialysis sessions and is still being monitored by toxicologists for the possible recurrence of mercury in her blood.

Earlier, the first of the two accused, also a minor, was arraigned on Oct. 4, pleading not guilty to the charge that he helped commit the crime.

Originally, only one student was charged, but in the course of the preliminary investigation, one of the principal witnesses was found to have been directly involved in the incident.

In their respective counter-affidavits, the two students, who were later expelled from the PSHS, gave conflicting statements as to who was the one liable.

A hold-departure order dated Oct. 26 was also issued against one of the students who had been accepted for admission to two universities in the United States.

Smith remains under detention ...

From page A21

where he should serve his sentence of up to 40 years. Three of the US Marine's coaccused, Lance Corporals Keith Silkwood and Dominic Duplantis and Staff Sgt. Chad Carpentier, were acquitted for lack of evidence.

Pozon's order was based on Article 5, Paragraph 10 of the VFA, obliging the two governments to decide jointly on the facility where a US soldier shall serve his sentence.

Smith's appeal—submitted with the conformity of the Department of Justice as counsel for the Department of Foreign Affairs—meanwhile, invoked Paragraph 6 of the same article which gives the US custody of American military personnel on trial in the Philippines until the completion of all judicial proceedings, including the appeals process.

The defense had filed a manifestation on Friday telling Pozon that the Philippines and the US, through Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and US Ambassador Kristie Kenney, had already agreed that Smith should be returned to US custody.

Nicole's lawyer, however, said the agreement between the two officials was invalid.

"The Philippine government has no legal obligation to return custody of the accused to the US Embassy, but as of Dec. 4, upon the order of the court, the Philippines acquired custody. Now we are the laughing stock of the world when he is in our own jail guarded by American security guards," Ursua told the court.

She further contended that Article 5, Paragraph 10 must apply to Smith's case as she said, "In the context of the VFA, judicial proceedings already end upon conviction, and that does not include appeal."

Sharing the position of the defense, Assistant Chief State Prosecutor Richard Anthony Fadullon said the only question left for the court to decide on was where Smith should be held pending his appeal. The agreement filed Friday, he said, addressed this though "the final agreement on where Smith should serve his sentence is to be done when there is final judgment."

During the hearing, Pozon also voiced out questions on certain VFA provisions that some people, particularly Nicole's lawyers, had criticized for favoring the United States.

The VFA is an RP-US agreement that also addresses the matter of criminal jurisdiction over US troops on trial in the Philippines and lays down legal protection for them.

DID YOU KNOW

FOUNDED in 1940, the Tala Leprosarium is the oldest facility for leprosy patients in Asia. It was established by Commonwealth Act 161 to manage and control the communicable illness, also known as Hansen's disease. Batas Pambansa 94 renamed the center in 1980 as the Dr. Jose N. Rodriguez Memorial Hospital, after the man who dedicated more than 50 years of his life to the control and prevention of leprosy in the country. The hospital, located at the border of Caloocan City and San Jose del Monte in Bulacan, remains a public health facility attached to the Department of Health.

Cyril L. Bonabente, Inquirer Research

Why can't I come home?
- Ninoy Aquino
Dare to ask.
Be an Inquirer.
INQUIRER

Lebanon deal seen after mass protests

BEIRUT—LEBANON'S DIVIDED factions on Monday were aiming for a political compromise after mass protests led by the Shiite militant group Hezbollah overwhelmed Beirut and raised fears of a return to civil strife.

The sparring pro- and anti-Syrian camps have paralyzed the government, which is backed by the West, as opposition Shiite and Christian protesters have clogged the capital in an escalating campaign to force a new national unity administration.

Arab diplomats were due in the capital to discuss a proposal with Prime Minister Fuad Siniora after securing the "agreement in principle" of Hezbollah which launched a rally on Sunday the army said was "unprecedented" in size.

Arab League envoy Mustafa Ismail was to hash out details of a six-point proposal regarding the opposition's participation in the government after its six ministers pulled out last month.

Sunday's mass protest in Beirut came on the 10th day of a thousands-strong sit-in on the government's doorstep, and was countered by a vast progovernment rally in Lebanon's second city of Tripoli.

The army estimated the size of the Beirut protest in the "hundreds of thousands," and organizers gave a similar figure for the progovernment rally in Tripoli.

The opposition has accused the government of being weak and corrupt and is demanding that Siniora's cabinet make way for a government of national unity.

Siniora has accused the opposition of trying to mount a "coup," and pledged that his government will overcome the crisis, while repeatedly urging a return to talks.

Ismail, whose visit on Monday is to be followed by Arab League chief Amr Mussa's arrival on Tuesday, said he had secured the agreement of the opposition that it did "not want to bring down the government or block its work." "The government in turn says I welcome the opposition's participation... Hence, what we need is additional (discussion of) details of these guarantees." Hezbollah MP Hassan Fadlallah confirmed that the movement's leader Hassan Nasrallah had given a positive response to the Arab envoy.

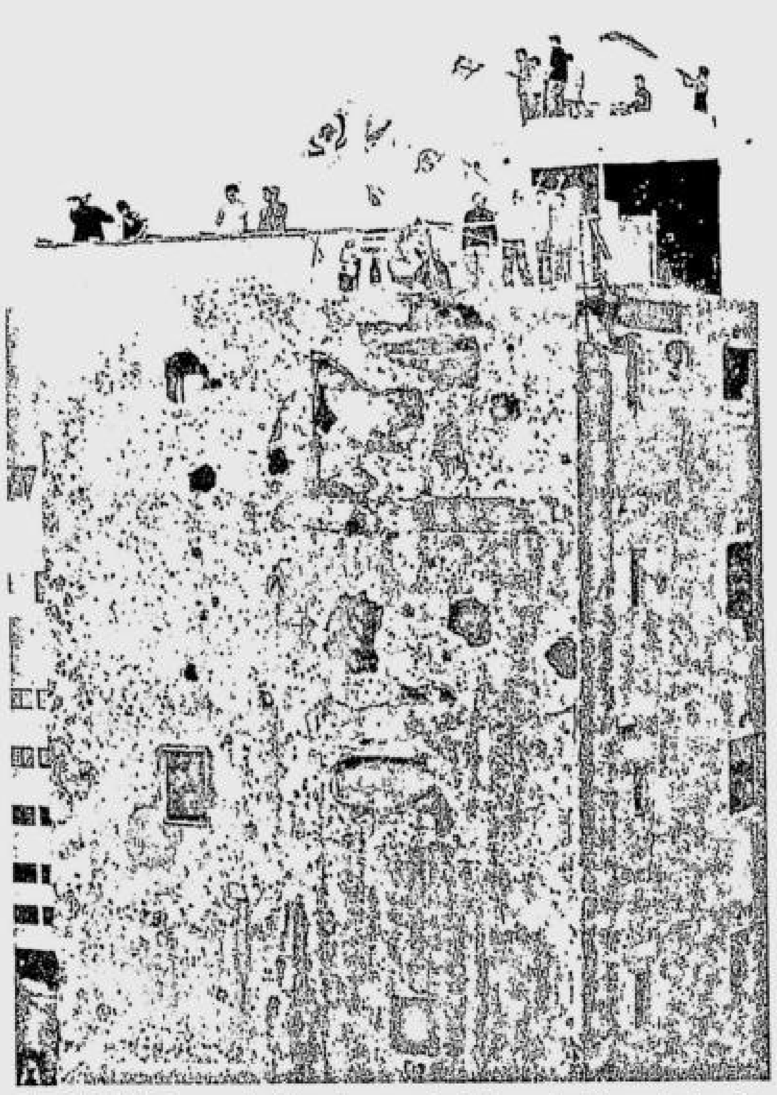
"Nasrallah has informed Mustafa Ismail that Hezbollah sees positively any initiative that includes the formation of a government of national unity which secures a blocking minority," Fadlallah said.

"But in the end our position will be decided after being discussed among opposition leaders."

The protesters want to replace the current cabinet, formed after 2005 elections, with a national unity government that they say is required by the power-sharing arrangements in force since the end of the 1975-90 civil war.

The opposition has warned that if its demands are not met, it will form its own interim government and hold early elections, and has also hinted at other forms of civil disobedience including blocking main roads in the coming days.

Siniora's coalition has accuses the opposition of seeking to block cabinet endorsement of plans for an international tribunal to try suspects in the 2005 murder of former premier Rafiq Hariri, widely blamed on Syria. *AFP*



PROTESTERS atop a building damaged in Lebanon's civil war during the 10th day of an open-ended protest to force the resignation of Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Saniora, in central Beirut, Lebanon, Dec. 10. AP

Australia announces citizen test for migrants

SYDNEY—MIGRANTS WHO want to become Australian citizens will be forced to sit an English language test and sign a commitment to the country's laws and values, Prime Minister John Howard announced Monday.

Howard, whose announcement comes one year after racial riots erupted on Sydney beaches when white mobs attacked Lebanese-Australians to "reclaim the beach," said there was popular support for a citizenship test.

The test will ensure immigrants have a working knowledge of English as well as an understanding of basic aspects of Australian society, culture and history, he said.

"It is designed, not as some kind of trivial pursuit, but is designed to ensure that people do understand and have a working capacity in the national language, which is English," he said.

The conservative prime minister, who has tightened immigration rules while in office to deter refugees from arriving here by boat from South East Asia, said the test was not intended to be discriminatory.

"It's not designed in any way to keep some people out and encourage others to come in, that's not the purpose of it," he said.

"This is not a negative discriminatory test, this is a test that affirms the desirability of more fully integrating newcomers into the mainstream of Australian society. This is about cohesion and integration, it's not about discrimination and exclusion."

Howard said the tests would apply to all new migrants who apply for citizenship after four years residency. *AFP*

WORLDBRIEFS

N. Korea nuke talks to resume Dec. 18

BEIJING—Six-party talks aimed at dismantling North Korea's nuclear weapons will resume on Dec. 18 after more than a year's suspension, China's Foreign Ministry said on Monday. The fifth round of talks between the Koreas, the United States, Japan, Russia and host China stalled late last year over Pyongyang's objections to US financial penalties. Washington said North Korea was counterfeiting US currency and trafficking drugs. "The second stage of the fifth round of the six-party talks will start from Dec. 18 in Beijing after consultations among the parties," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Qin Gang said in a statement on its Web site (www.fmprc.gov.cn) after six weeks of diplomatic haggling over a date. The fresh diplomatic push comes two months after North Korea tested a nuclear device on Oct. 9, unleashing a wave of international condemnation that brought even its longtime supporter, China, behind UN Security Council sanctions. The reclusive fortress state agreed on Oct. 29 to rejoin the talks, but it took weeks of discussions to settle on a date. In September last year, North Korea agreed to "abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs" in return for aid and security guarantees from the United States and other countries. ***Reuters***

Fiji coup leader warns against dissent

SUVA—Fiji's military commander Voreque Bainimarama warned Monday resistance to his coup could lead to violence and told Australia's foreign minister to stop encouraging protest in the island nation. As Bainimarama set about consolidating his overthrow of the government last week, a court cleared Fiji's former coup leader and prime minister Sitiveni Rambuka of inciting a military mutiny in 2000. That rebellion resulted in Bainimarama fleeing for his life from his barracks in Suva. But the military strongman held complete control of the capital Monday, warning dissent would not be tolerated. He criticised Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer's call for passive resistance to the Dec. 5 takeover, saying they could have serious consequences. ***AFP***

Gunmen kill 3 sons of Abbas aide in Gaza

GAZA—Unidentified gunmen killed three sons of a Palestinian intelligence official loyal to President Mahmoud Abbas in Gaza on Monday, opening fire on a car dropping the children at school, police and hospital officials said. The attack, in which an adult bystander was also killed, came a day after gunmen opened fire at the interior minister's convoy in Gaza amid growing tension between the governing Hamas militant movement and Abbas's Fatah faction. ***Reuters***

Aceh votes to decide life after war

BANDA ACEH, INDONESIA—ACEHNESE poured into polling stations on Monday to vote in a landmark election in the once-rebellious Indonesian province aimed at bolstering a peace deal between the government and separatists.

Around 2.6 million people are expected to cast ballots in the first direct election for a governor and top posts in Aceh, devastated by the Indian Ocean tsunami two years ago and battered for decades before that by a simmering civil war.

Eight candidates are running for governor, including two retired Indonesian army generals and former GAM commander Irwandi Yusuf, who escaped from prison during the tsunami.

"I have voted for the person whom I think is most suitable to lead Aceh. I hope he can bring Aceh to a brighter future which is safe, peaceful, prosperous and free from corruption," said businessman Zulfan after voting in a residential area of the provincial capital, Banda Aceh.

Voters made their choices by stabbing a nail into the ballot paper, with pictures and names of the candidates, and then had their fingers dipped in dark un-washable ink.

"All this time during the conflict, gunshots have been heard. Now it's very different from the old days. It is calm and I am very relieved that we can have our vote today," said Badriah Ali, a 35-year-old civil servant in Gampong Cot village on the outskirts of Banda Aceh.

Turnout in areas of the province seen by Reuters was strong, although numbers had slowed to a trickle by midday with polling stations due to shut at 2 p.m. *Reuters*

OBAMA AFP

Dem's Obama tests presidential waters

WASHINGTON—DEMOCRATIC star Senator Barack Obama was to make his first trip Sunday to the important political testing ground of New Hampshire as he lays the foundation for a possible 2008 presidential run.

Obama, who was scheduled to speak Sunday at celebrations to mark his party's success in last month's elections, also reportedly planned to use the visit to introduce himself to the political establishment in New Hampshire, which holds America's first presidential primary in little more than a year.

Considered a relative newcomer on the national political stage, Obama has not said he is certain to run for the White House. But he is expected to make a decision in the next few weeks.

There is no shortage of supporters pressing the photogenic African-American lawmaker to toss his hat into the ring however. Among them are longtime booster, Senate colleague Dick Durbin, who has begun an online petition drive urging Obama to run.

Another new website boosting Obama's presidential candidacy is www.runobama.com.

Meanwhile, Senator Hillary Clinton, tipped by polls and pundits as the early favorite for the 2008 Democratic nomination, also has been holding talks with party officials on joining the race, according to news reports. Newsweek magazine reported that Democratic insiders say it is "99 percent certain" that the former first lady will run.

So far only one Democrat has formally announced he will challenge for the nomination, Iowa governor Tom Vilsack. *AFP*

Germans probe Russian trader in polonium case

MOSCOW—GERMAN AUTHORITIES announced on Sunday that they had begun a criminal investigation of a Russian businessman after finding traces of polonium 210 around Hamburg beginning on Oct. 28—four days before he met in London with the former Russian spy who died after ingesting the radioactive substance.

The British police have so far found no evidence of polonium contamination in London earlier than the date of that meeting, Nov. 1. The Sunday announcement raised the possibility that the polonium was carried from Moscow to London by way of Germany. It has also added to suspicions that the case is somehow connected to the shadowy world of agents and businessmen, defectors, spies and exiles let loose by the dissolution of the KGB and still entwined with successor agencies.

The former Russian spy, Alexander V. Litvinenko, long a critic of Russia's president Vladimir V. Putin, made deathbed accusations that Putin was complicit in the poisoning—an accusation the Kremlin has derisively dismissed. The case has strained relations between Russia and Britain, and has now entangled Germany.

The man the Germans have put at the center of scrutiny is Dmitri Kovtun, a 41-year-old Russian. He has been in a Moscow hospital since Dec. 7, suffering from exposure to polonium. *NYT*

After Katrina, Latino baby boom

NEW ORLEANS—FIRST CAME THE storm. Then came the workers. Now comes the baby boom.

In the latest twist to the demographic transformation of New Orleans since it was swamped by Hurricane Katrina last year, hundreds of babies are being born to Latino immigrant workers, both legal and illegal, who flocked to the city to toil on its reconstruction.

The throng of babies gurgling in the handful of operational maternity wards here has come as a big surprise—and a financial strain—to this historically black and white city, which before the hurricane had only a small Latino community and virtually no experience of illegal immigration.

"Of all the myriad things that have changed after Katrina, this wasn't high on anybody's priority list," said Dr. Mark Peters, chief executive of East Jefferson General Hospital in Metairie.

Because many immigrant mothers cannot afford to pay for prenatal care or delivery services, New Orleans' newest citizens are adding an unexpected load to the decimated health infrastructure in a city abandoned by many of its doctors. Much of the state-financed Charity Hospital system, which before Hurricane Katrina provided the bulk of care to New Orleans' uninsured and indigent population, remains closed.

Lacking health insurance and barred from most government assistance, expectant immigrant mothers can go to only the handful of charitable clinics that are still operating and that do not question a woman's immigration status when offering low-cost prenatal care.

"Prenatal care is our daily nightmare," said Shaula Lovera, the program coordinator for the Latino Health Access Network, an outreach service operated by Catholic Charities.

The two health units providing prenatal care run by the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals saw more than 1,200 pregnant women from January to mid-November. Virtually all were Latino immigrants.

"Before the storm, only 2 percent were Hispanic; now about 96 percent are Hispanic," said Beth Perriloux, the head nurse in the department's health unit in Metairie.

There are so many pregnant women that the clinics have reached capacity. Dr. Erin Brewer, the department's medical director, said, "We've gone from having a maternity clinic two to three days a week to five days a week." *NYT*

HP unveils Blade for quick, efficient storage

hp

Think a blade is just a server? Think again. The HP StorageWorks storage blade adds a new dimension to the space- and money-saving blades architecture, unlocking the potential for new applications.

Storage area networks and blades are natural complements. By cutting cables (and the need for host bus adapters), a blades/SAN combination can save you up to 60 percent compared to the total cost of ownership for server/SAN solutions. But sometimes applications require the easy expansion and high performance of direct attached storage. Until now, blades shops with that need were out of luck.

Delivering on HP's "blade everything" promise, HP engineers designed the new HP BladeSystem c7000 enclosure to accept storage blades in its 16 server slots. Each HP StorageWorks SB40c can house up to six hot-plug, small form-factor drives (SAS or SATA).

If you have applications that need more high-performance storage, or if you need the ability to quickly expand a server's storage capacity, the HP StorageWorks SB40c offers additional data storage of up to 876 GB in minutes.

Since the server blade is attached directly to the server, its performance is fast. And because it's a blade, it's simple to expand and manage. No extra wires to connect, no SAN connections to reconfigure.

Plugged into the HP BladeSystem chassis, the HP StorageWorks SB40c enjoys many of the same efficiencies as blades servers, including integrated Fibre Channel and HBAs with streamlined connections to enterprise virtual array SANs

HP's Array Configuration Utility takes the pain out of configuration and setup. And after setup, you can manage your blade storage units with HP Systems Insight Manager, the same management and troubleshooting tool that keep tabs on other HP storage solutions—even remotely.

The storage blade SB40c allows you to expand storage capacity quickly, without migrating an application to another server. Between its internal hard disks and HP's StorageWorks SB40c storage blade, a server blade can now have access to over 1 TB of capacity with the capability for essential fault tolerance.

This blades data storage unit–an HP first–is just one more way HP's commitment to research is paying off. No matter what your storage needs or network configuration, HP continues to expand on a range of solutions designed to put the power of information technologies to work for your unique business needs.

For more information, go to www.hp.com/go/storageworks

ADVT.

The WORLD

Editor
Luverne B. Gueco

Bush begins new consultations on Iraq

WASHINGTON—US PRESIDENT George W. Bush begins Monday a new series of consultations on Iraq after a shock-therapy indictment of his conduct of the war by an independent policy commission.

Bush will make a public show of his deliberations, starting with a visit Monday to the State Department and meetings with top outside experts in the Oval Office.

On Tuesday, he will have a video-conference with military commanders and US Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad.

ANTIWAR protestor Winni Bennett, 83, attends a rally in support of impeachment of Bush, Dec. 10 in Santa Barbara, California, on Human Rights Day.
AFP

Wednesday will see the president at the Pentagon.

Bush will huddle with top foreign policy and military aides, seeking to bounce back after the Iraq Study Group's warning that Iraq's plight is "grave and deteriorating" and without urgent action could spark a regional crisis.

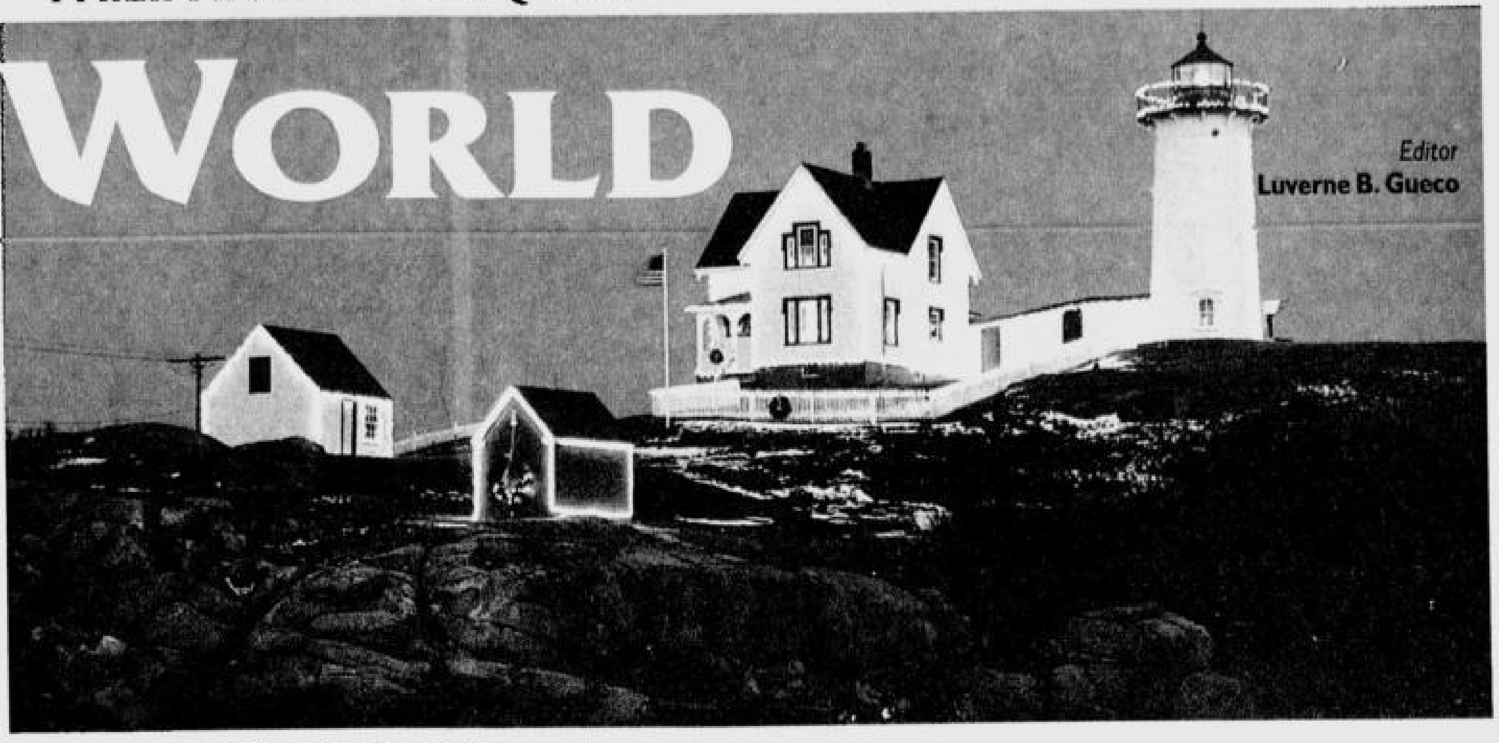
Intense scrutiny, which built up ahead of the report, has now shifted to the White House, as Bush sifts options and sees his political base erode, as rival Democrats gear up to take over Congress in the new year.

The White House says Bush is aiming to unveil his new approach in a speech to the nation before Christmas.

"This, in the end, is about what happens on Pennsylvania Avenue and in the Oval Office," said Bruce Riedel, a veteran US foreign policy official, now with the Brookings Institution.

"The purpose of this commission is shock therapy for the Oval Office to give them an extremely cold shower and say to the President the course you are on is going to lead to catastrophe and you have got to change it," he said at a Brookings briefing.

Despite the clamor in Washington for Bush to embrace the report, the White House views it as only one source of advice. Several internal administration studies of Iraq policy are shortly expected to conclude. AFP



CHRISTMAS CHEER ON THE ROCK
Holiday lights decorate the 127-year-old Cape Neddick Light on Nubble Rock in York, Maine, Dec. 9, in York, Maine.
AP

Arab states announce nuclear energy ambitions

RIYADH—GULF ARAB COUNTRIES WANT TO acquire nuclear energy capability and have ordered a study on a possible joint atomic program, a statement issued at the close of a two-day Gulf Cooperation Council summit said on Sunday.

"The countries of the region have the right to nuclear energy technology for peaceful purposes," GCC chief Abdul-Rahman al-Attiya told a closing session of the meeting in Riyadh.

The statement from the six-nation bloc comes amid concerns over Iran's nuclear ambitions, as well as long-standing Arab suspicion over Israel's presumed nuclear weapons.

The GCC—which groups Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates—also said it would push ahead with plans for a European Union-style economic union in the world's top oil exporting region.

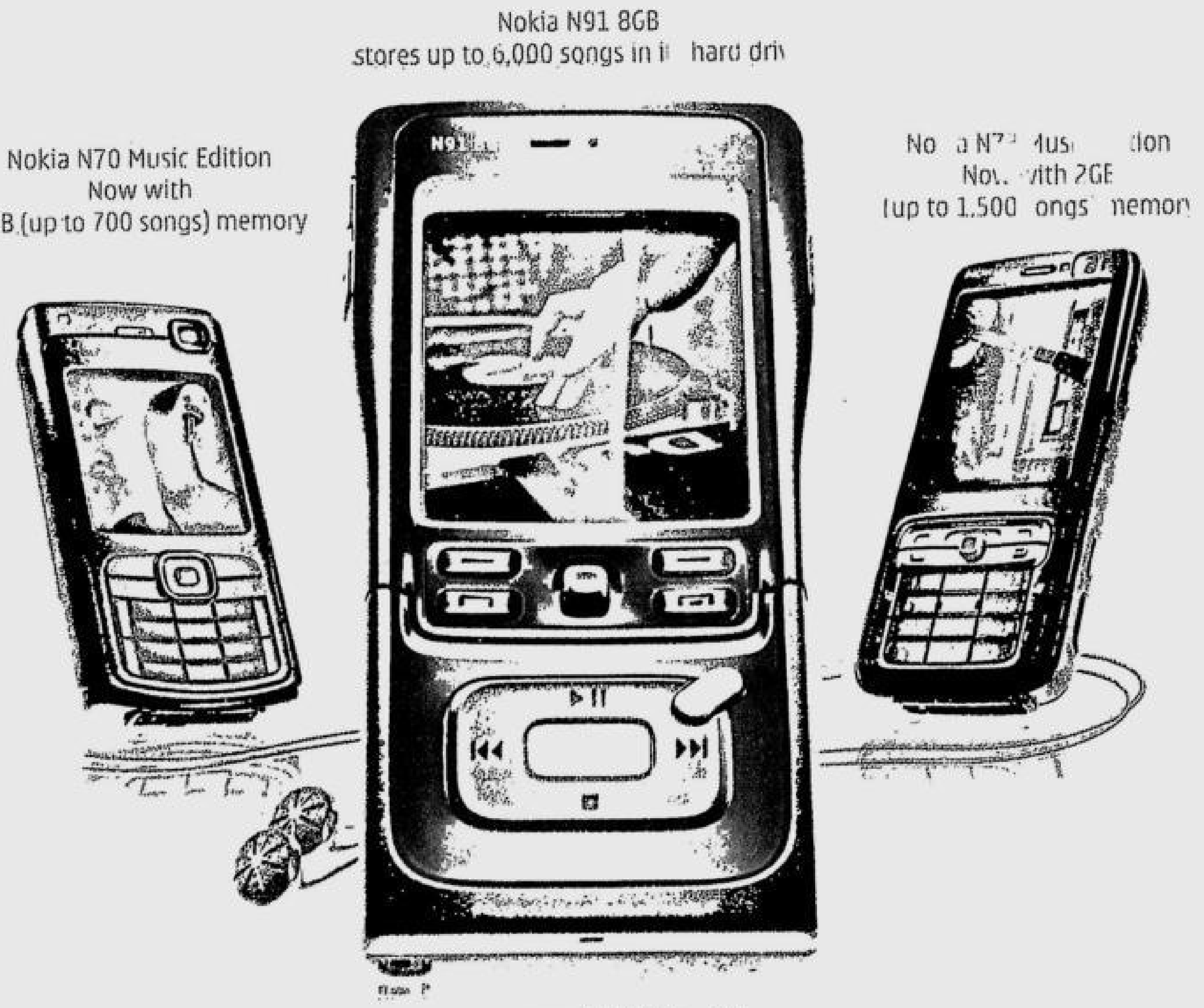
But in a setback, officials said that Oman had decided it would not manage to meet the economic conditions for a 2010 deadline for the single currency, raising questions about whether other countries might also delay entry.

Known for conservative political and economic policies, the Gulf Arab countries maintain close alliances with the United States and share US concern over growing Iranian power.

Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter and home to Islam's holiest sites, wants to check what it views as the creeping influence of the Shiite Muslim nation in the Arab region through support for Lebanese group Hezbollah, Shiite parties in Iraq and Tehran's alliance with Syria.

The GCC countries are mainly Sunni, with Shiite minorities, though Shiites are a majority in the island kingdom of Bahrain.

Saudi officials say that a nuclear Iran could spur a regional arms race, hinting that Saudi Arabia, a key US ally, could look to acquire the technology too. *Reuters*



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2006 REVISITED
A Congolese man lifts a bucket filled with mud as he searches for gold nuggets in a pit at Pkata gold mine, near Bunia in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Oct. 30.
REUTERS

Iran hosts disputed Holocaust confab

TEHRAN—IRAN ON MONDAY defied an international outcry by holding a conference aimed at breaking taboos on the Holocaust and attended by a number of controversial Western "revisionist" historians.

Iran says the conference is aimed at providing a forum for historians to air any view about the Holocaust but Western countries have countered the event smacks of denial of the mass slaughter of six million Jews in World War II.

Among the participants was French professor Robert Faurisson, who denies the existence of the gas chambers and was given a three-month suspended sentence in France in October, according to the event's program.

Also taking part is Fredrick Toeben, a German-born Australian who is well-known for denying the scale of the Holocaust and has spent several months in a German jail for inciting racial hatred. He will give a paper on "The Holocaust: A Murder Weapon."

Other prominent names on the program of scheduled speakers include David Duke, a US white supremacist and former Klu Klux Klan member who is due to give a paper entitled "Holocaust Inquiry."

Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki, in his opening address, styled the conference as a scientific forum that would seek to find answers to the questioning of the Holocaust by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Ahmadinejad has repeatedly questioned the truth of the Holocaust, at one point describing the event as a "myth" and casting doubt on the scale of the killings.

"The simple question of the president of Iran: 'If the Holocaust is a historical event why can it not be researched?' set off a wave of accusations against Iran without trying to find a logical answer," said Mottaki.

"The basic aim of this conference is not to deny or to prove the Holocaust but is to provide an opportunity for researchers from Europe to give their views about this historical phenomenon," he added. *AFP*

WHAT'S INSIDE

▣ **Suns shine;** Kobe strikes for Lakers /A28

SPORTS

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Editor **Teddyvic S. Melendres**

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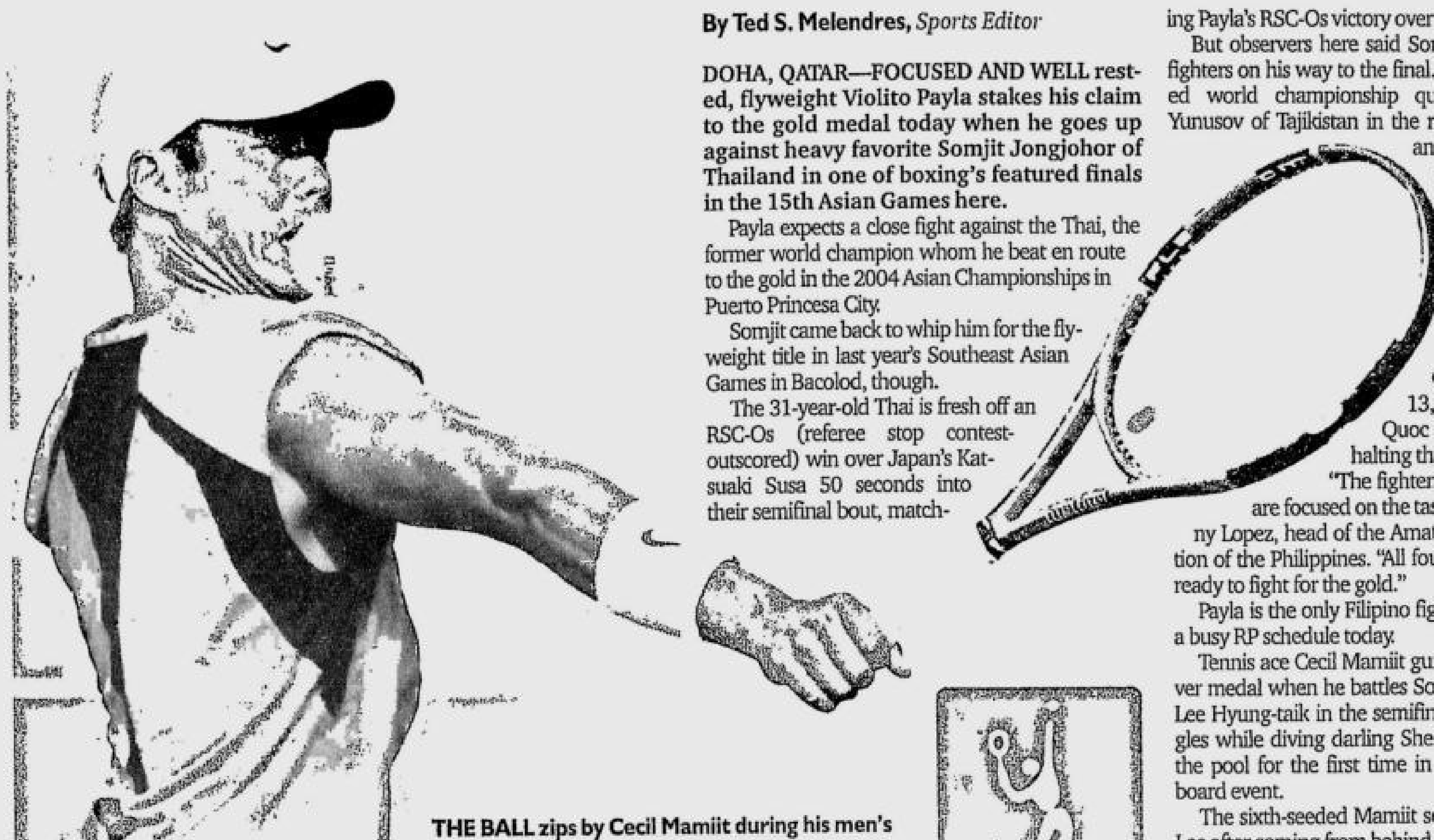
▣ **Maskaev still** WBC champ after beating Okhello /A28

Payla eyes gold vs old Thai foe



THE BALL zips by Cecil Mamiit during his men's singles game against Wang Yen-tzuoo. Mamiit stunned the fourth-ranked Taiwanese. LYN RILLON

By Ted S. Melendres, *Sports Editor*

DOHA, QATAR—FOCUSED AND WELL rested, flyweight Violito Payla stakes his claim to the gold medal today when he goes up against heavy favorite Somjit Jongjohor of Thailand in one of boxing's featured finals in the 15th Asian Games here.

Payla expects a close fight against the Thai, the former world champion whom he beat en route to the gold in the 2004 Asian Championships in Puerto Princesa City.

Somjit came back to whip him for the flyweight title in last year's Southeast Asian Games in Bacolod, though.

The 31-year-old Thai is fresh off an RSC-Os (referee stop contest-outscored) win over Japan's Katsuaki Susa 50 seconds into their semifinal bout, matching Payla's RSC-Os victory over China's Yang Bo.

But observers here said Somjit fought tougher fighters on his way to the final. The Thai outpointed world championship quarterfinalist Anvar Yunusov of Tajikistan in the round of 16, 25-20, and Kazakhstan's Mirat Sarsembayev, 20-11, in the quarterfinals before stopping the Japanese.

The 27-year-old Payla won on points over Iran's Omran Akbari, 33-13, and Vietnam's Tran Quoc Viet, 35-11, before halting the Chinese.

"The fighters are ready and they are focused on the task ahead," said Manny Lopez, head of the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines. "All four of our fighters are ready to fight for the gold."

Payla is the only Filipino fighting for the gold in a busy RP schedule today.

Tennis ace Cecil Mamiit guns for at least the silver medal when he battles South Korean top seed Lee Hyung-taik in the semifinals of the men's singles while diving darling Sheila Mae Perez enters the pool for the first time in the 1-meter springboard event.

The sixth-seeded Mamiit set up his match with Lee after coming from behind and stunning fourth-ranked Wang Yeu-tzuoo of Chinese Taipei, 2-6, 6-2, 6-2, in yesterday's quarterfinals at the Khalifa International Tennis and Squash Center.

Mamiit, last year's Southeast Asian Games singles gold medalist, is the only Filipino left in the tennis events after the departure of Eric Taino and the doubles pairs of Patrick John Tierro-Johnny Arcilla and Denise Dy-Czarina Mae Arevalo.

Perez is coming into the competition still hurting from a hip injury but is expected to advance to the finals of the 1-meter springboard. The winner of three SEA Games gold medals, she was reported to have been under therapy in Manila in the past three weeks.

Zardo Domenios and Nino Carog compete in the men's 1-m springboard in the morning.

The equestrian riders—Toni Leviste, Paola Zobel, Danielle Cojuangco and Juan Ramon Lanza—compete in the preliminaries of the individual jumping event hoping to improve on their team finish in the team competition where they wound up sixth. The individual event was won in the 2002 Busan Asiad by the semi-retired Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski.

Danilo Fresnido vies in the men's javelin in athletics while the chess team of Darwin Laylo, Ronald Dableo and Jodera Docena play in the seventh round of the team classical Swiss at 3 p.m.

The cycling squad, which has smashed three RP records but still without a medal, sends Paterno Curtan and Alfie Catalan to different heats of the men's points race qualifying round.

The fencers drew Iraq as its first foe in the round of 16 of the men's team foil event while the sepak takraw squad is scheduled to battle China in the women's double preliminary match and Malaysia and Thailand in the men's double preliminaries.

RP ties Syria chessers, keeps faint hopes alive

Standings after five rounds:

13 points—India; 10.5—Qatar; 9.5 – Uzbekistan; 9— China, Turkmenistan; 8.5—Vietnam, Indonesia, Iran; 8— Syria; 7.5—Philippines, Kazakhstan, Mongolia; Bangladesh, UAE; 6.5—Jordan, Bahrain; 5—Japan, Palestine; 2.5— Macau

DABLEO

DOHA—THE PHILIPPINES missed another golden opportunity move up halfway through the chess competition of the 15th Asian Games Friday.

IM Ronald Dableo (ELO 2425) trounced untitled Jwan Bakr (2335) as expected but the Philippines managed only a 1.5-1.5 draw with Syria in the fifth round and remained in a tie for 10th to 12th places with Kazakhstan and Mongolia in the mixed team competition.

GM-candidate Darwin Laylo (2448) was held to a draw by IM Imad Hakki (2422) in the top board and Jeda Docena bowed to Afamia Mir Mahmoud (1983) in the third board.

Overall, the Philippines is now five and a half points behind top seed India and three off second-running host Qatar with only four rounds remaining.

"We still have a slim chance, but our players have to win decisively in the next four rounds," said National Chess Federation of the Philippines (NCFP) director and delegation head Wilfredo Abalos.

"In the sixth round, we can't afford to be complacent against 11th seed Mongolia," added Abalos, who is supervising the team with head coach Oliver Dimakiling.

Both Abalos and Dimakiling hope Dableo will continue his strong performance even with the black pieces.

It was the third straight win for the 27-year old Dableo, who also hurdled Mak Tok Kuan of Macau and GM Murtas Kazhgaleyev of Kazakhstan in the previous two rounds.

Laylo, on the other hand, is expected to bounce back from a so-so performance in the first five rounds where he posted 1-2-2 win-draw-loss record.

His sixth-round foe is Batchluun Tsegmed.

Docena, who has two wins and three losses, faces another acid test against Moscow-based Munguntuul Batkhuyag.

Meanwhile, India blanked China, 3-0, in an amazing display of strength to pull away in the 21-nation competition with 13 points out of a possible 15.

First to score was GM Pentala Harikirshna, who penetrated the hedgehog pawn structure of GM Wang Yue to threaten mate with queen and bishop in the back rank.

GM Krishnan Sasikiran overcame a fierce kingside attack by Bu Xiangzhi, parrying the mating threats and initiating his own attacks en route to a decisive win.

Rapid chess gold medalist GM Koneru Humpy completed the rout with a victory over Zhao Xue.

Top Filipino gymnast aims for '08 Olympics

By June Navarro

ROEL Ramirez: Lone gymnastics bet looks forward to a bigger event. AFP

ROEL RAMIREZ IS SETTING his sights on the biggest stage in his sport after achieving a Philippine gymnastics record in the Doha Asian Games recently.

The country's top male gymnast is back in training just a day after planing back from the Asiad to prepare for a couple of tournaments next year.

"I'm happy with my performance, but I'm looking forward to a bigger event next year," said Ramirez, who landed sixth overall in the vault of artistic gymnastics where at least 80 participants from 20 countries competed.

The 24-year-old Ramirez, the country's lone gymnastics entry, reached the finals of a gymnastics event for the first time in the country's long history of participation in the quadrennial meet.

Winner of two gold medals in the 2005 Manila Southeast Asian Games, Ramirez will see action in the Pacific Alliance championships in Hawaii in April before trying his luck in the world championships, the qualifying event for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, to be held in the Netherlands.

"There's really no time to relax. I have a lot of catching up to do if I want to qualify for the Olympics," said Ramirez, who will also compete in the parallel bars, rings, floor exercise and pommel horse in the Olympic qualifying.

"I'll try these events and see if I can clinch a slot," added the third year BS Physical Education student from the University of the East.

The country's top gymnastics gun made it to his first Asiad in Doha after a knee injury kept him out of the 2002 Busan Games.

RP Sked Dec. 12

Archery (Lusail Archery Range)Men's Individual Round of 16 9:45 a.m.—Mark Javier vs. Sergey Khristich (KAZ) Marvin Cordero vs Amery Umerov (UZB)

Athletics (Khalifa Stadium) Men's javelin throw Final 4:25 p.m.—Danilo Fresnido

Boxing (Aspire Hall 5) Men's Flyweight-51kg Final 2 p.m.—Violito Payla vs. Somjit Jongjohor (THA)

Chess (Al-Dana Indoor Hall) Men's Team Classical Swiss Round 7 3 p.m.—Darwin Laylo, Ronald Dableo, Jodera Docena

Cycling-track (Aspire Hall 1) Men's Points Race Qualifying 2:26 p.m.—Paterno Curtan (Heat 1) 3 p.m.—Alfie Catalan (Heat 2)

Diving (Hamad Aquatic Center) 1-meter Springboard Preliminary 10 a.m.—Nino Carog, Zardo Domenios (men) 7:25 p.m.-Sheila Mae Perez (women)

Equestrian (Equestrian Jumping Arena) Jumping-Individual Round A Jumping-Individual Round B 9 a.m and 2:30 p.m.—Toni Leviste, Paola Zobel, Danielle Cojuangco, Ramon Lanza

Fencing (Al-Rabui Indoor Hall) Men's Team Foil Round of 16 11 a.m.—RP vs Iraq

Karate (Qatar Sports Club Indoor Hall) 9 a.m.-Women's Individual Kata Round of 8 10 a.m.—Men's Individual Kata Round of 8

Sepak takraw (Al-Sadd Indoor Hall) Women's Double Preliminary Match 10 a.m.—RP vs. China Men's Double Preliminary Match 2 p.m.-RP vs. Malaysia
6 p.m.-RP vs. Thailand

Tennis (Khalifa Tennis and Squash Complex) Men's Singles Semifinal 10 a.m.—Cecil Mamiit vs. Lee Hyung-taik (KOR)

Wushu (Aspire Hall 3) Men's Combined Taijikuan (Shadow Boxing)
10 a.m.—Kenneth Ladica Lim

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2006 ASIAN GAMES MEDAL TALLY

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Nation	G	S	B	Total	Nation	G	S	B	Total
China	116	65	43	224	Indonesia	2	2	9	13
South Korea	43	36	67	146	Syria	2	0	3	5
Japan	39	47	56	142	Vietnam	1	8	6	15
Kazakhstan	17	11	32	60	UAE	1	3	2	6
Thailand	8	10	20	38	Jordan	1	3	1	5
Taiwan	7	5	17	29	Lebanon	1	0	2	3
India	6	14	13	33	Tajikistan	1	0	2	3
Qatar	6	8	7	21	**Philippines**	0	3	6	9
Saudi Arabia	6	0	4	10	Myanmar	0	3	4	7
North Korea	5	7	13	25	Kyrgyzstan	0	1	4	5
Bahrain	5	7	4	16	Iraq	0	1	1	2
Malaysia	4	9	6	19	Sri Lanka	0	1	1	2
Hong Kong	4	9	5	18	Pakistan	0	1	0	1
Uzbekistan	4	7	10	21	Turkmenistan	0	1	0	1
Iran	3	12	9	24	Nepal	0	0	3	3
Singapore	3	4	9	16	Afghanistan	0	0	1	1
Kuwait	3	3	2	8	Bangladesh	0	0	1	1
Mongolia	2	3	3	8	Macau	0	0	1	1

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GTK's crack jumpers now all tourists

MARISTELLA TORRES

By Ted S. Melendres

DOHA, QATAR—AS SOON AS MARIStella Torres and Thelma Bulauitan-Gabito bombed out of the medals in the women's long jump on Sunday night, the athletics squad knew it was time to pull out the pegs and fold the tent.

The last of the country's four brightest hopes for a medal in the centerpiece athletics competition had become tourists in this desert metropolis by the Persian Gulf, completely overwhelmed by the world-class opposition.

Torres, opting to give it a go despite a nagging leg injury, leapt to 6.25 meters in her fourth attempt and finished sixth in the event handily won by Japan's Kumiko Ikeda with 6.81m. India's Anju Bobby George took the silver (6.52) and Kazakhstan's Ola Rypakova the bronze (6.49).

The 25-year-old United States-trained Torres was well off her personal best of 6.63m.

Gabito had just one legal jump and fouled twice to settle for a 12th-best 5.71m in the 14-jumper field. The 32-year-old from Manila wound up ninth after the first three attempts and failed to advance to the jump-off among the eight finalists that included Torres.

"Torres was coming off an injury, so she wasn't 100 percent," said national athletics head Go Teng Kok. "Gabito was never a factor, *puro* foul *sa* takeoff (she always fouled on the take-off."

The 11-man athletics squad had looked to the jumpers, including Henry Dagmil and Joebert Delicano in the men's event, to win at least a bronze in this 15th Asian Games.

Dagmil fell 9 centimeters short of the bronze in finishing fifth with a jump of 7.76m while Delicano, who finished second like his compatriot in their respective groups during the qualification stage, came in eighth in 7.56m.

Marathoner Eduardo Buenavista timed a respectable two hours, 24 minutes and 50 seconds but still wound up 12th, 12:06 minutes behind Qatar's Mubarak Hassan Shami (2:12.44).

Mercedita Manipol was scheduled to compete in the 5,000m last night, but members of the coaching staff said the country's undisputed queen of long-distance runs would need to surpass her personal best of 16:40.81 to land in the top five.

Bahrain's Nadia Mohamed Al Jjafini, a regular campaigner in world athletics, goes into the race with the best personal best of 15:22.39, followed by China's Xue Fei with 15:38.66.

Pugs will win with rags for shorts—Lopez

By Ted S. Melendres

DOHA, QATAR—THE BOXERS WILL FIGHT AND GET THE gold even if they have to wear jerseys and pairs of shoes which may have seen better days.

The president of the Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines (Abap) said yesterday that reports about his fighters wearing rags for shorts and heavy boxing shoes which are best worn by combat soldiers are mere distractions which they don't need at this stage of the competition in the 15th Asian Games.

"They are only distractions," said Manny Lopez, who brought several pairs of Asiad-approved jerseys and shoes for his wards when he arrived here on the second day of the boxing event.

"The boxers have remained focused and determined to win. They will not allow such distractions to affect their fights."

Flyweight Violito Payla debuted in his category Saturday last week wearing an old pair of red shorts with a big tear on one side. After he was done with his first round foe, Payla gave the same sweat-drenched jerseys and shoes to featherweight Anthony Marcial, who beat his opponent as well.

Light flyweight Godfrey Castro slipped into the same uniform and drubbed his foe the next day, but complained about the "drag" created by the old, heavy shoes which they had used in last year's Manila Southeast Asian Games.

Lopez declined to say which party was to blame for the uniform mess but said that, contrary to reports, the Abap did not receive any budget from the Philippine Sports Commission for the purchase of the uniforms, whose specifications are approved by the International Amateur Boxing Association (Aiba).

He said that on Nov. 26 they received a letter from the PSC, dated Nov. 20, telling them that the government sports agency would reimburse the cost of the boxers' uniforms. The letter arrived at the Abap office less than 48 hours before the boxers left for Doha.

"We were already communicating with the uniform supplier, Asics, three months before the Games," said Lopez. "All we needed was the budget. And then we received the letter when everyone was about to leave."

PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez said sports commissioner Richie Garcia, who is in charge of NSA (national sports associations) affairs, instructed the NSAs to buy their own uniforms in cognizance of their respective sport's specifications.

"We told them we would reimburse the cost of the uniforms," Ramirez said. "Since they (NSAs) have their own specifications, they know which uniforms to buy."

MARIA Antoinette Leviste on board Globe Platinum Just J Kidit Saint Clair clears a fence during the 2006 Asian Games Equestrian competition.

LYN RILLON

Top 3 women faster than RP triathlon bets

By Ted S. Melendres

DOHA, QATAR—THE BEST OF THE PHIlipppines' triathlon racers failed to measure up to true continental strengths when both the men and the women wound up in the bottom half of the final standings in the 15th Asian Games here.

The diagnosis is that traditionally strong triathlon countries had been keeping their finest racers away from the prying eyes of the Asian opposition.

Arland Macasieb, the better-placed Filipino in the men's race but a well-beaten 14th with a time of 2 hours, 5 minutes and 37.61 seconds, admittedly never raced before against most of the men who landed in the Top 10.

And so did Emmanuel Quilala who wound up 19th in a field of 29 with a time of 2:10:29.70 but still ahead of the next-best Southeast Asian, 21st-placed Heidilee Mohammad of Malaysia (2:13:20.05).

The punishing event—consisting of a 1.5-kilometer swim, 40 km bike and 10 km run legs—was topped by 1999 world champion Dmitry Gaag of Kazakhstan in 1:50.53.14.

The New Jersey-based Macasieb, 31, and the 18-year-old Quilala from Makati would have also missed the medals if they competed in the women's division.

Gaag, a 35-year-old regular in the European triathlon circuit but rarely seen in Asian competitions, dueled neck-and-neck with Hong Kong's Daniel Lee Chi-wo in the swim and bike segments before pulling away for the victory in the 10 km run.

The winner of Hong Kong's athlete of the year award in 2002 and 2003, Lee settled for the silver medal with a time of 1:51:18.99, less than three seconds ahead of another Kazakh, Daniil Sapunov (1:51:20.55).

"I had never seen some of the top finishers before," Macasieb was quoted by the official Asian Games online news flash.

The 24-year-old Sapunov, though, competes in Asia and is popular among racers from Southeast Asia. He finished second in both the Subic Bay International Triathlon in 2004 and the China International Triathlon in Jiayuguan early this year.

China's Wang Hongni took the gold in the distaff race in 1:59:44.27, with Japan's Ai Ueda and Akiko Sekine settling for the silver and bronze, respectively, in 2:04:04.81 and 2:04:48.42.

The Philippines' Lea Langit timed 2:14:46.69 for 11th place in the 15-woman field while Alessandra Araullo was third to last in 2:15:55.19.

(When Gaag won the 1999 World Championships in Montreal, Canada, the organizers did not have a recording of the Kazakhstan national anthem. So they played the music from the film "Chariots of Fire"—Ed)

Sermona sticking it out in long distance events

JULIUS Sermona gets a well-deserved drink from a fellow runner after winning the 30th National Milo Marathon Sunday.

ERIK ARAZAS

By Jasmine W. Payo

HIS PET EVENTS REMAIN HIS PRIORITY.

Newly crowned Milo marathon champion Julius Sermona won't be running away from track races.

A natural long distance runner, Sermona had long set his sights on the gold in the 5,000-meter and 10,000-meter events of the Southeast Asian Games.

So no amount of persuasion will make Sermona shift gears even after the stunning finish that carried him to victory in the 42K grand finale run of the 30th National Milo Marathon last Sunday.

The 28-year-old Sermona ruled the men's race in two hours, 21 minutes and 52 seconds, upsetting veterans Bernardo Desamito, Allan Ballester and last year's champion Cresenciano Sabal.

Even more impressive, Sermona completed only his second marathon just 19 seconds shy of the men's race record of 2:21:33 set by Sabal last year.

"This is part of my preparation for the SEA Games in Thailand next year," the Negros Occidental native said in Filipino.

Sermona pocketed a silver in the 5,000m and a bronze in the 10,000m of the 2005 SEA Games held in the country last year.

For women's champion Jho-an Banayag, her concerns are more immediate and practical.

Banayag clinched her second straight title in record-breaking fashion in the women's 42K event to bag a total cash prize of P85,000.

"My father is a farmer, I want to buy a small rice field or agricultural equipment with my prize," she said in Filipino.

Hardly challenged, the 25-year-old Banayag checked in at 2:48:16, more than five minutes ahead of the 2:53:58 mark set by Cristabel Martes in 2004.

"I just want to help my parents, it's also what I did last year," said Banayag.

ADJUSTMENTS

Taekwondo jins set sights on Olympics

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THIS EARLY, PHILIPPINE TAEKWONDO IS SETting its sights on the Beijing Olympics in 2008.

After delivering two silvers and three bronzes in the ongoing Doha Asian Games, taekwondo officials yesterday said they need to make adjustments in preparation for the Olympiad in China.

Philippine Taekwondo Association president and Philippine Olympic Committee chair Robert Aventajado said that though he's happy with the Asiad performance, they still need to "work doubly hard" to achieve the Olympic dream.

"While we have improved, the field has also improved. So we need to work double time," said Aventajado in a radio interview yesterday.

The 12-man team is set to arrive by midday today fresh from its strongest Asian Games showing ever.

The jins are expected to hone up their skills to compete in two Olympic qualifying in London in September and in Vietnam in November next year.

The Olympic hopefuls are Doha Asiad silver medalists Thsomlee Go and Toni Rivero as well as bronze winners JR Rivero, Eunice Alora and Veronica Domingo.

Aventajado said he would be more involved in the Olympic preparation as taekwondo is constantly being counted upon to deliver the first ever gold medal for the country in the quadrennial sportsfest.

"There is a big public expectation from us," said Aventajado.

Jinggoy leaves it all to MVP

IN HUDDLE

Beth Celis

BAP PRESIDENT SEN. JINGgoy Estrada obviously has had a change of heart since the last time I talked with him at the session hall of the Philippine Senate some weeks ago.

Perhaps acting on the clamor of the BAP board, which prompted him to go for nothing less than the SBP presidency, Jinggoy did just that.

However, when he recently bumped into PLDT chair Manny V. Pangilinan at the wedding of cager Don Allado where they both stood as principal sponsors, Jinggoy said he stepped back to give MVP the option to choose the position he wants.

"I told him I'm willing to accept any position. *Ang importante, ma*-unite *ang* Philippine basketball at the earliest possible time. *Susunod ako kung ano ang gusto niya. Okay na sa akin* what is left available," Jinggoy explained.

The senator said he and MVP did not only talk about basketball, they also tackled several other matters such as the telecom business, politics, even the overseas Filipino workers.

***

Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao did not complain about the whopping P65,000 fine slapped on him by the PBA commissioner's office for the altercation with TNT manager Frankie Lim in Tacloban two weeks back.

Neither was there a peep for the two game suspension that was meted him.

Yeng let out a loud howl of protest, however, when he read somewhere that PBA commissioner Noli Eala had used the word "childlike" to describe his actuations."

"That was uncalled for. *Pinarusahan na nga kami* with unfair penalties, *tinawag pa kaming* childlike. I resent that. He could've worded it in a more diplomatic manner," Yeng said.

He would not have minded if it was uttered by someone with moral authority like former PBA commissioner Leo Prieto, Yeng added.

***

Yeng deplored the P10,000 fine assessed on the utility boys "who were just standing there."

"E talaga namang nakatayo lang 'dun yung mga ballboys. *Tanong nga nila, 'Ano ba ang ginawa namin, bakit pati kami na*-fine?"

"Kawawa naman 'yung mga tao dahil 'yung mawawala sa kanila equivalent to a month's salary na. *Magpapasko pa naman*," Yeng said.

Asked to comment on the Dec. 5 memo issued by the commissioner's office regarding professional oncourt conduct, Yeng said he has not read it yet.

The memo states that game officials shall impose stricter implementation of Rule #8, Section VII on fines and penalties involving the use of profanity, verbal altercation, disrespectful gestures or address to an official, overt actions indicating resentment to a call, taunting, coach, trainer or official entering the court without permission from officials and any act of unsportsmanlike conduct by anyone seated on the team bench detrimental to the game. The memo goes on to list specific examples of each violation which for sure will cramp the style of many coaches.

***

Got some interesting feedback from our readers, who informed me that the Pagcor has been involved in ending bets for some years now. One of them even sent me a receipt from the Internet Sports Betting, which is accredited by the government agency.

If this has been going on, why the need for a tie-up with the PBA?

According to former PBA legal counsel Butch Cleofe, the Pagcor has been knocking on PBA doors since the time of Commissioner Jun Bernardino.

Time and again, it was turned down.

The Pagcor said it would conduct the bettings anyway, with or without the consent of the PBA.

Cleofe warned this would be illegal because the PBA has the proprietary rights to the game endings.

Nobody knows what happened since.

But the Pagcor continues to hold the PBA ending bets to this day.

Hapee aims to rebound against Magnolia today

RYAN Arana of Harbour Center is sandwiched by Beau Belga and another Hapee PCU defender. AUGUST DELA CRUZ

THE HAPEE-PCU TEETH MASTERS, licking the wounds of a first loss, try to get back on track when they clash with the Magnolia Spinners today in the PBL Silver Cup at the Emilio Aguinaldo College Gym.

The Teeth Masters (5-1) and the Spinners (1-4) collide at 4 p.m.

Henkel Sista hopes to get more quality minutes from a returning big man against Harbour Centre earlier at 2 p.m.

The 6-foot-8 Samigue Eman, sidelined for a month due to health reasons , saw limited action to finish with three points, six rebounds and two blocks in Sista's triumph over Cebuana Lhuillier-Pera Padala, 77-69, last Thursday.

"It's good to have Eman back because we're able to get an advantage defensively," said Sista coach Caloy Garcia. "I'm satisfied with what he played, but I expect him to be more aggressive next time."

Showing uncharacteristic form, the pacesetting Teeth Masters blew an 18-point lead and took a 66-63 setback againt Mail and More last Saturday.

With Hapee-PCU's loss, the second-running Henkel Sista and Mail and More moved within striking distance at 4-2.

But the Teeth Masters will try to redeem themselves behind the star trio of Mark Borboran, Jason Castro and Larry Rodriguez.

Robert Sanz, Ardy Larong and Mark Moreño have also been providing the Teeth Masters an offensive boost in recent outings.

Yousif Aljamal, 6-foot-8 Nigerian Sam Ekwe and Pong Escobal—the core of NCAA champion San Beda—will be again at the forefront of the Spinners' charge, along with UAAP standouts Jeff Chan, Bonbon Custodio and Jonas Villanueva.

Led by collegiate star JC Intal, Harbour Centre will try to improve on its 2-2 record after last week's upset loss against Toyota Otis, 64-60.

Backing Intal is a veteran cast led by Al Vergara, Reed Juntilla and Marvin Ortiguerra. *Jasmine W. Payo*

STANDINGS	W	L
Hapee-PCU	5	1
Mail/More	4	2
Henkel Sista	4	2
Toyota Otis	3	2
TeleTech	3	2
H. Centre	2	2
CL-P. Padala	2	3
Magnolia	1	4
K.Kettle.-UST	0	6

GAMES TODAY
(Emilio Aguinaldo College Gym)
2 p.m.—Harbour Centre vs Henkel Sista
4 p.m.—Magnolia vs Hapee-PCU

N. Cotabato five gains NBC semis

DAVAO CITY—THE NORTH Cotabato Braves exacted vengeance over Valencia Golden Harvest, 76-68, Sunday to advance to the semifinals of the 2006 Spring Cooking Oil-NBC National Cup basketball tournament at the RMC gym here.

After losing the first match to Valencia, Gov. Manny Piñol's Braves controlled the game throughout to book a semis date against Spring-Tagaytay.

Henry Fernandez fired 24 points to lead all scorers, while Valencia's Buboy Berami, who scored 17 in Valencia's 82-78 win Saturday, was limited to four markers.

In the nightcap, Harold Sta. Cruz scored with 1.4 seconds left in overtime to propel Bacchus/Harbour to victory.

Montaña's four-point swing in the final 28 seconds, highlighted by Jonjon Gonzaga's triple, helped businessman Armando Quibod's Jewelers tie the game and extend the match.

But Bacchus/Harbour steadied in the extension to pull through.

Sta. Cruz and Marlon Kalaw led the team of businessman Mikee Romero with 15 and 14 points, respectively.

RACING TIPS

By TOP CHOICE

Race 1—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Noble Principality (7), El Cid (1), Brazen Truth (4), Star Colony (2), Epic Energy (10)

Race 2—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Ger Francis (7), Windsong (13), Brazilian Babe/Save Our Queen (2), Untouchable (2), Pound for Pound (6)

Race 3—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Can And Will (8), Gamby's Attack (4), Top Quest (5), Kawiliwili (1), Magic Bullet (6)

Race 4—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Kaiphia (6), Sweet Talk (13), Crystal City (14), Reporter (3), Money Man (7)

Race 5—(Qrt/Tri)—Triple Threat (6), Iron Tower (7), Manila's Style (3), Freedowm Charger (1)

Race 6—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Verdadera (3), BMT Baby (8), Gundam (7), Royal Scepter/Queen Esther (10), Special Guest (12)

Race 7—(Penta/Qrt/Tri)—Bumble Bee (8), Choska Run (10), Scarab (6), Ingay Ingay (3), Clear Stone (7)

Race 8—(Super Six/Qrt/Tri)—Friendly Fire (13), Top of D'Line (11), Spinning Bullet (6), Honoree (12), Golden Lance (4), Mas Que Nada (14)

SPORTSWATCH

Molina, Amador arnis best players

RICHIE MOLINA OF TACURONG CITY AND MARIA MARTINA AMADOR OF UNIversity of Makati emerged as best players in the Arnis Encounter 2006 held recently at the RMC Sports Complex in Vito Cruz, Manila. In the team competition, first place went to University of Makati; second, Tacurong City; third, Polytechnic University of the Philippines; fourth, Rizal Technological University and fifth, Baguio City. The Arnis Special Award (Parangal Ng Kagitingan) went to Aris Lumiwes of Baguio, while a special citation was given to the Bicol arnis team for fulfilling its commitment despite being struck by calamity. Arnis Philippines (ARPI) president Raymond Velayo said all gold and silver medalists will enter the arnis draft camp set to begin in January 2007. "Representatives in the 2007 SEA Games are to be chosen in the draft camp," said Velayo. For details, call 0916 -5540622 or visit www.arnisphilippines.com.

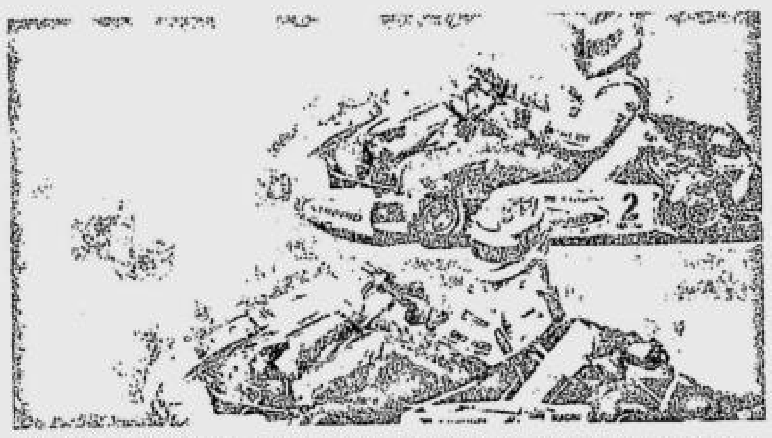
Baguio hosts RGFPP golf tourney

THE COUNTRY'S GOLF-LOVING ROTARIANS GATHER FOR CAMARADERIE AND friendly competition from Jan. 16 to 21 for the 21st RGFFP Annual Golf Tournament at the Baguio Country Club and John Hay Golf and Country Club in Baguio City. "This is a chance for all Rotarian golfers to join us for nearly a week of fellowship and fun," Jose Vito Borromeo, president of the organizing Rotary Golfing Fellowship Foundation of the Philippines, said. The usual juicy prizes such as cars and cash will be up for grabs in the event for competing Rotary members and their guests. For inquiries, contact Pauline Sevilla at 0920-9199000 or the RGFFP secretariat at 724-8174 or fax 721-5940.

Fistorama features amateur boxing

FISTORAMA BIDS GOODBYE TO PROFESSIONAL BOXING AND TODAY AIRS ITS first episode featuring top amateur boxers on RPN-9 starting at 3 p.m. The bouts are part of the 1st Joe Cantada Open Amateur Boxing Championships held at the Cantada Sports Center in Bagumbayan, Taguig City. The finals were held at the air-conditioned ballroom of the CSC. Fistorama is shown worldwide twice weekly through ABS-CBN Global's The Filipino Channel/Pinoy Central TV. Golf Power Plus airs at 4 p.m., featuring the semifinal match between College of St. Benilde Team 1 and Olivares College in the PCSO Women's Inter-Collegiate Beach Volleyball Challenge.

Bumgarners don RP colors in Asian karting



THE BUMGARNERS—Michele (No. 1) and Mark—hope to claim the top two spots at the starting grid anew when they represent the country in the 2006 Asian Karting Championship Finals in Macau set Dec. 14-17.

ASIAN KARTING QUEEN MICHELE BUMgarner and brother Mark will leave for Macau to represent the Philippines in the championship round of the 2006 Asian Karting Championship set Dec. 14-17.

The Bumgarners will be competing for the first time in the highly competitive Formula A class, featuring world champ David Fore and the best drivers from Europe and Japan.

Michele and Mark have raced at the Macau track for the past two years and both have done well. With their equipment acquired from Europe and the training they got from former world karting champion Terry Fullerton, the Bumgarners hope to do well.

The Bumgarners view the event as a great opportunity to increase their level of racing experience as both have observed most of the Formula A drivers race in Italy during their stints in the Italian Open Masters Championship.

"We understand it will be very tough but the challenge is exciting as this is a fantastic opportunity to have the Philippines participate in competition with world-class karting drivers," said Michele. "This will prove once again that Filipino drivers are capable of world-class competition levels."

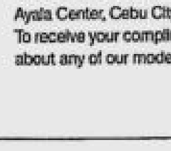
"This would not have been possible without the logistical support of our 2006 season partners Petron, Accel, Gold's Gym, City Kart Racing, Department of Tourism, Automobile Association Philippines, Oakley, Powerade, Solar Sports and Salon Prive which believe that Filipino drivers can compete at world-class racing levels," added Mark.

This will be Michele's last full-time kart race as she intends to move on to full-time single seat formula racing after her successful debut in AF3 this season.

She plans to move to the Formula Atlantic series in the US and Canada in 2007.

Why men become pilots.

"And what about me?"



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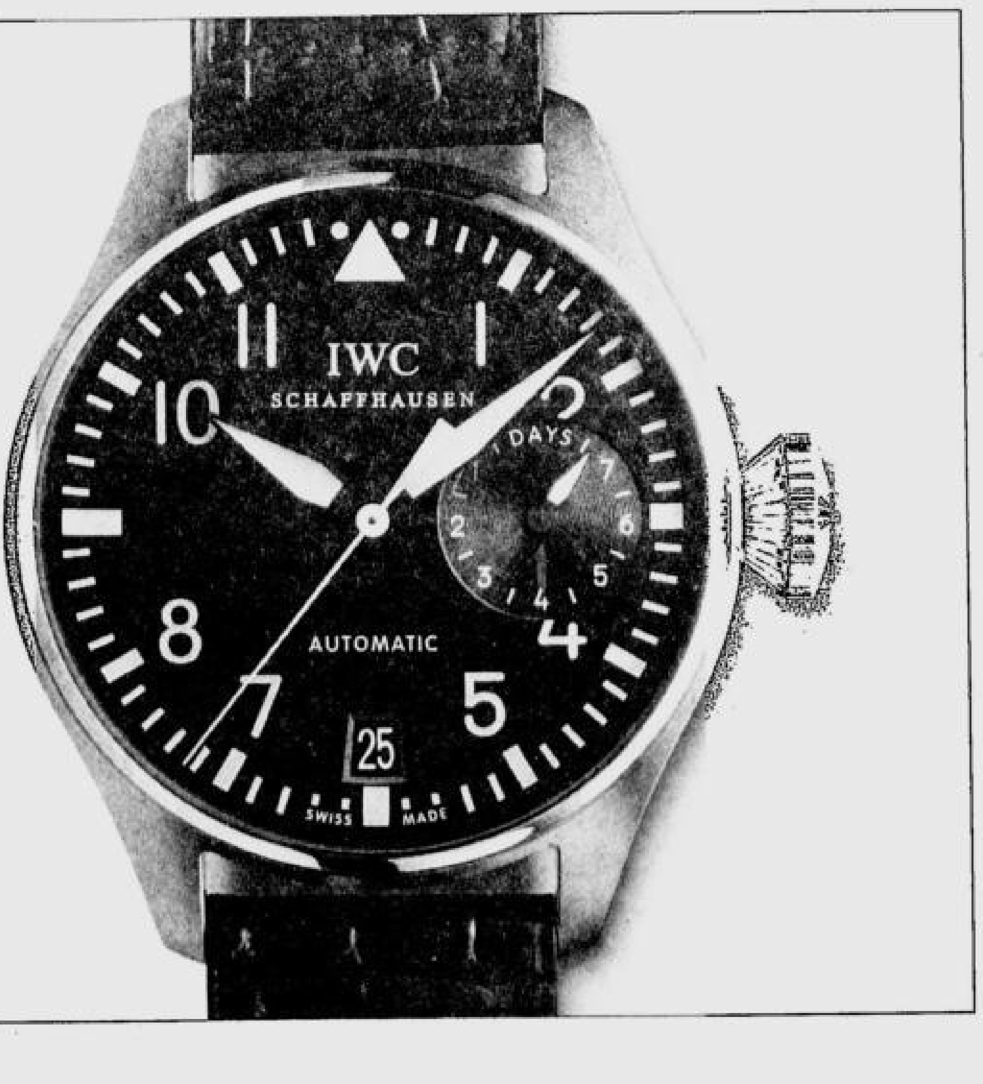

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SPORTS

Swedes break swim record

HELSINKI—SWEDEN BROKE THE WORLD RECORD IN THE 4 X 50 METRES freestyle relay in the final of the European short course championships on Sunday. Stefan Nystrand, Petter Stymne, Marcus Piehl and Jonas Tilly clocked one minute, 24.89 seconds, beating the previous record of 1:25.03 held by the Netherlands. France finished second in 1:25.16 seconds with the Netherlands third in 1:26.03. *Reuters*

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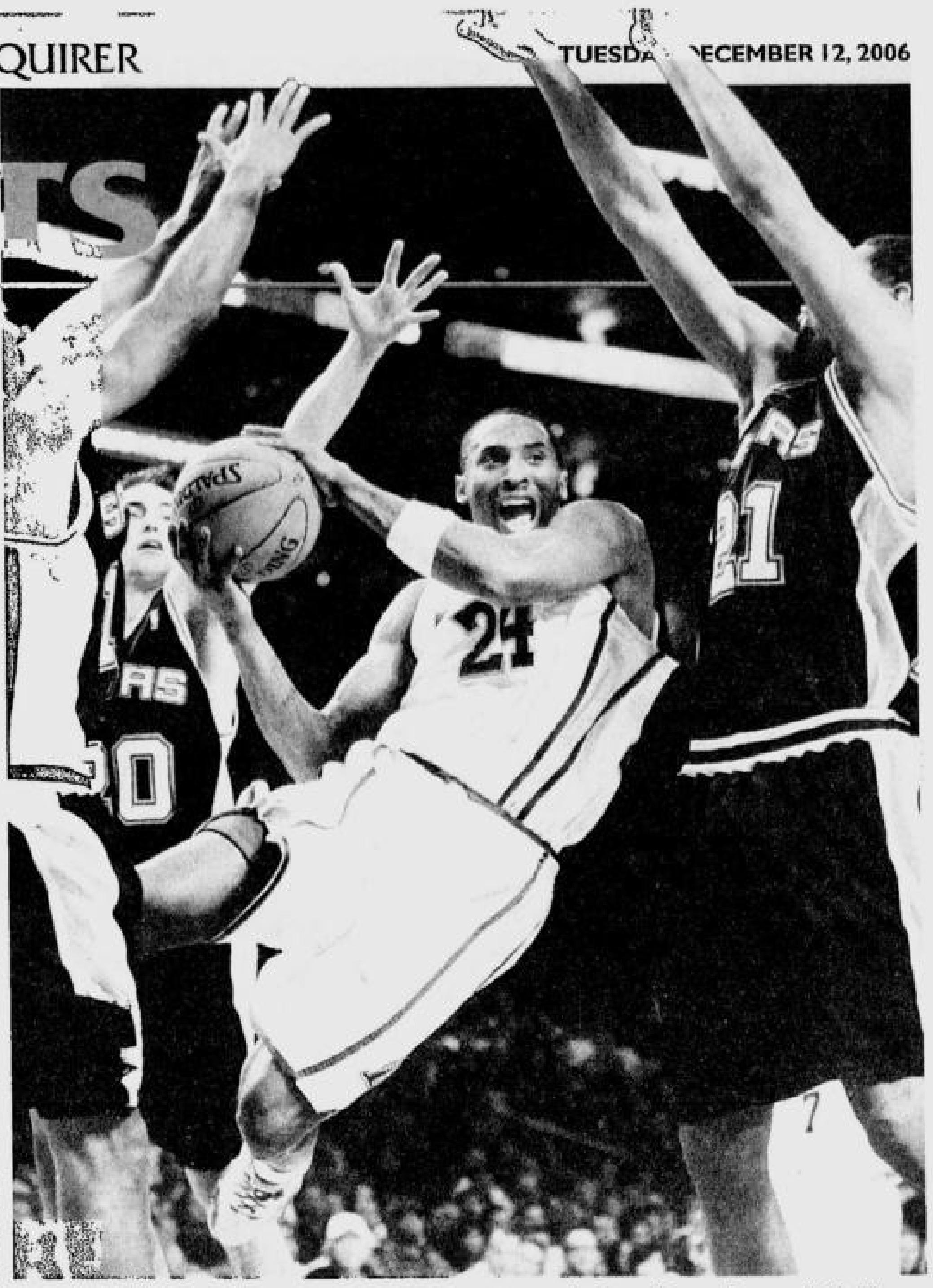


LAKERS' Kobe Bryant (center) defies the defense put up by Spurs' Bruce Bowen (left), Tim Duncan (right) and Manu Ginobili during their game Sunday AP

Suns shine; Kobe strikes for Lakers

NEW YORK—LED BY 22 POINTS FROM Amare Stoudemire, the Phoenix Suns received double figure efforts from six players in a 114-84 thrashing of the Charlotte Bobcats on Sunday to extend their unbeaten streak to ten games.

Stoudemire also grabbed 12 rebounds for the double-double while Boris Diaw had 17 points and Leandro Barbosa helped out with 15.

Steve Nash, the two-time league MVP, also chipped in with double-double hitting for 11 points and dishing out 10 assists as the high-powered Suns put up over 100 points for the seventh consecutive game.

Sean May had a game-high 26 points for Charlotte but could not keep the Bobcats from absorbing their third consecutive thrashing, losing their last three contests by 20 or more points.

The Bobcats got the contest off to a bright start hitting their opening three shots, taking a 30-27 lead after the first quarter.

In the second, the Suns began to dictate the pace to hold the 57-54 advantage at the intermission.

The Suns then stamped their authority on the contest, outscoring Charlotte 33-17 in the third quarter and cruising to another comfortable win

Jarrett Jack and Martell Webster each bagged 22 points to spark the Portland Trail Blazers to a 93-83 win over the Raptors in Toronto.

The SuperSonics received 20 or more points from four players, including 26 from Luke Ridnour, to edge the Golden State Warriors, 117-115, in Seattle and stretch their unbeaten run to three games.

Kobe Bryant returned to score 34 points and pulled down eight rebounds after sitting out a game with a sprained ankle powering the Lakers to a 106-99 win over the San Antonio Spurs in Los Angeles. *Reuters*

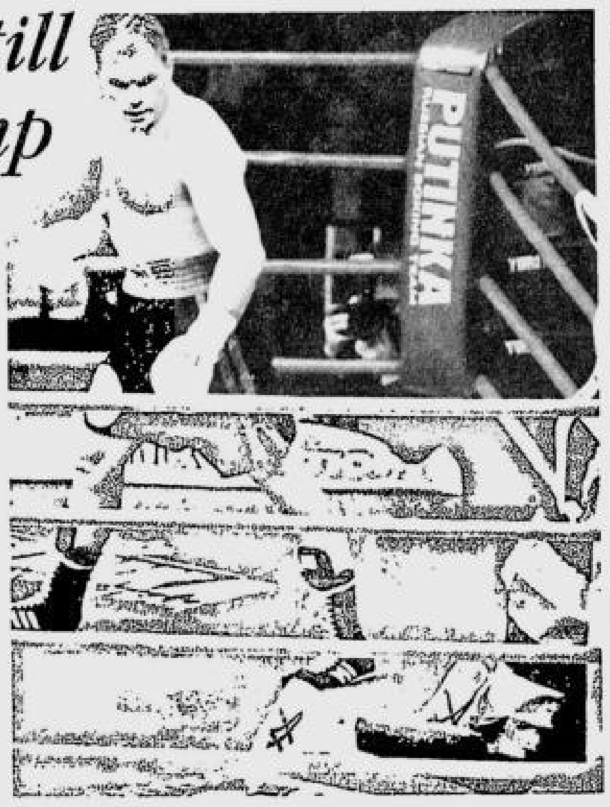
Maskaev still WBC champ

MOSCOW—OLEG MASKAEV retained his WBC heavyweight crown Sunday with a unanimous decision over Peter Okhello in the first world title fight held in Russia.

The 37-year-old Maskaev (34-5, 26 knockouts) captured the WBC title in August with a 12th-round knockout of Hasim Rahman. Okhello, a 34-year-old Ugandan who lives in Japan, dropped to 18-8 with 16 KOs.

Maskaev kept Okhello backpedaling in the early rounds and knocked him down with seconds left in the fourth round at Olympisky Stadium.

Early in the 10th, Maskaev put Okhello into the ropes and later in the round battered him to a standstill with short jabs to the head. *AP*



OLEG Maskaev towers over fallen challenger Peter Okhello. AP

Germany cops World Cup

ST. JAMES, BARBADOS—GERMANY'S Bernhard Langer and Marcel Siem triumphed in a playoff over Scotland's Colin Montgomerie and Marc Warren here Sunday to win the World Golf Championships World Cup.

The German duo parred the first playoff hole to put paid to hopes of a first ever Scotland victory in the four million-dollar tournament, which featured 24 two-man teams playing two rounds of foursomes and two rounds of fourball.

The Scots bogeyed the first extra hole, the par-three 18th, after Montgomerie missed the green with his tee shot and Warren chipped four feet past.

Langer had also missed the green, but Siem's chip stopped just short of the hole to leave Langer to tap in for his second World Cup victory—16 years after he teamed with Torsten Gideon to win the title in Florida.

In Sunday's concluding foursomes, Langer and Siem had seized the outright lead at 17-under with their sixth birdie of the day at 16, but dropped back into a tie for the lead with their first bogey of the round at the next.

They finished with a five-under 66 on the rain-soaked Sandy Lane Resort course for a total of 16-under 268.

Veteran Montgomerie and rising European tour star Warren carded a two-under 69 that included two birdies, at the fifth and 11th, to book their spot in the playoff.

"That's the first time I've ever lost a playoff in my career," said Warren. *AFP*

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Japanese group bags Mirant plants in RP

Marubeni, Tokyo Electric offered $3B for assets

By Abigail L. Ho

THE JOINT VENTURE BETWEEN MARUBENI CORP. AND Tokyo Electric Power Co. (Tepco) has won the bidding for Atlanta-based Mirant Corp.'s Philippine power plants.

A person privy to the matter said the Marubeni-Tepco group placed a bid of close to $3 billion, which was not matched by the only other bidder—the venture between Malaysia's Tanjong Plc and OneEnergy, a partnership between Hong Kong's CLP Holdings and Japan's Mitsubishi Corp.

The source said that the OneEnergy-Sanjong group was given until the past weekend to make a counteroffer, but the consortium chose not to submit one.

"There's really no official announcement yet, no official award. I think the Marubeni-Tepco group emerged as the winner because the OneEnergy group did not come back with a counteroffer over the weekend," the source said.

Reports came out from Beijing over the weekend that the OneEnergy-Tanjong group decided to pull out of the Mirant auction due to concerns over the quality of some of the power firm's plants.

The source said the Marubeni-Tepco group's bid of almost $3 billion was quite high, considering that the expected revenues from Mirant's Philippine operations over the next 19 years were just more than $5 billion.

"The margin's already very thin, considering the size of their bid," the source said.

The source added that Marubeni-Tepco would also have to face a labor problem when it takes over Mirant Philippines.

The ongoing problem between Mirant Philippines management and the employees was not resolved during mediation proceedings at the National Conciliation and Mediation Board.

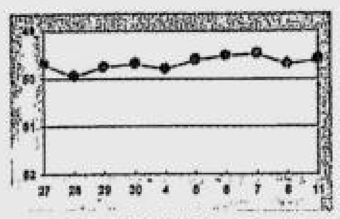
The labor problem, the source said, had now been elevated to the office of Labor Secretary Arturo Brion.

"That's the first problem that the new owners will have to face once the award is made," the source said.

JAPANESE / B2

INDICATORS

CURRENCIES



DECEMBER

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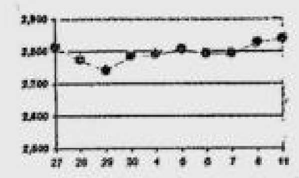
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 11, 2006

STOCK MARKET

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX
DECEMBER



(See stock market report on Page B2)

Stocks close higher

SHARE PRICES CLOSED 0.37-percent higher yesterday on follow-through buying in Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) after a favorable court ruling on its power tariffs, dealers said.

STOCKS/ B2

PNOC unit raises ₱16.7B from IPO

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

GEOTHERMAL ENERGY PRODUCER PNOC Energy Development Corp. successfully raised P16.7 billion from its offering of 5.22 billion shares at P3.20 each to brokers, small investors and institutional buyers last week, INQUIRER sources said yesterday.

PNOC-EDC, touted as this year's biggest IPO, will list its shares at the Philippine Stock Exchange on Wednesday.

PNOC-EDC is the fourth company to go public this year after First Gen Corp. of the Lopez family, CitisecOnline.Com, and Alliance Tuna International.

Market sources said PNOC-EDC's stock offer was "oversubscribed."

"We were scaling down orders because the demand was very strong. This is the world's second largest geothermal company and it has good prospects for its new projects," BDO Capital and Investment Corp. executive vice president Eduardo Francisco said.

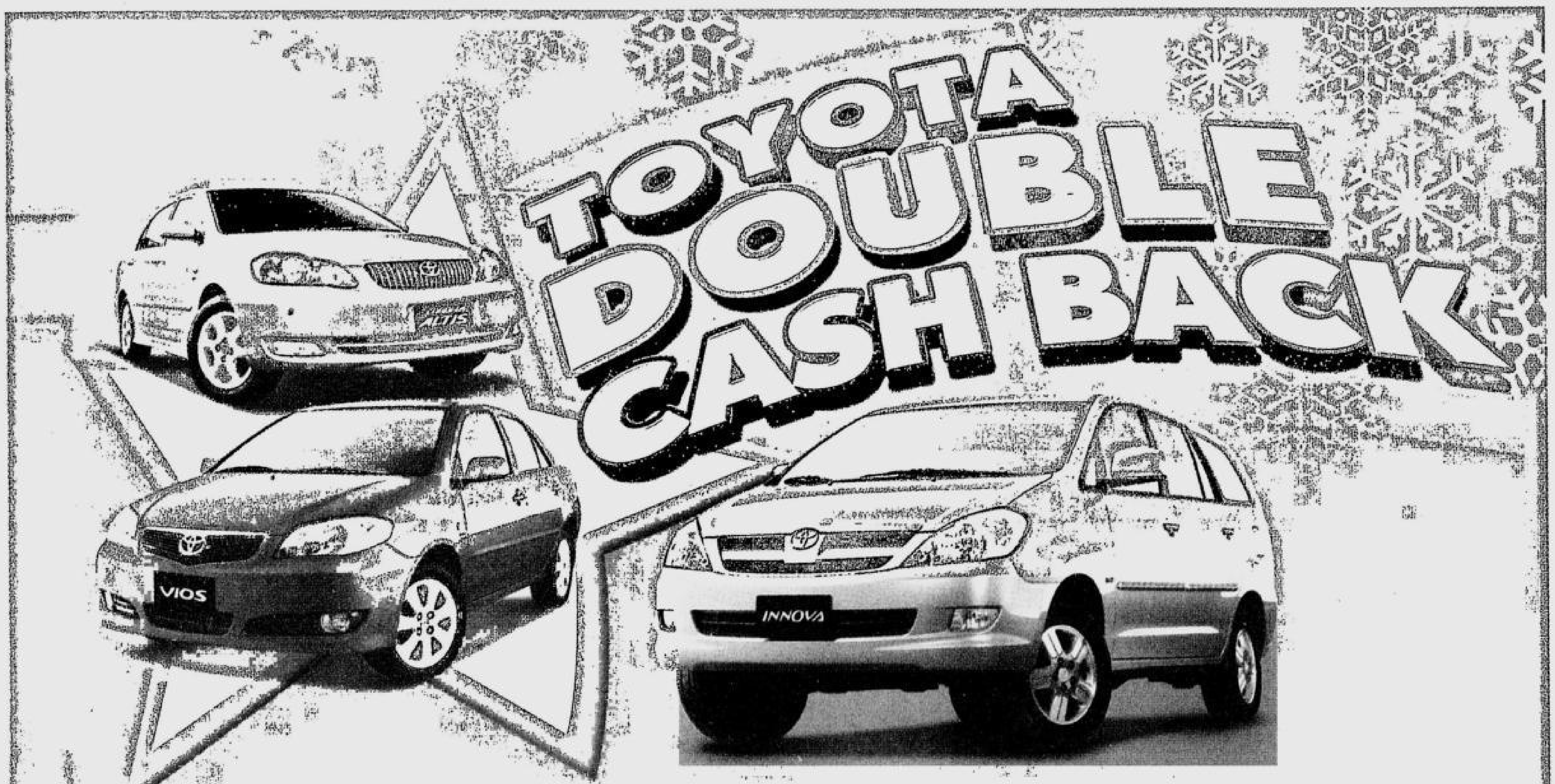
BDO Capital is the issue manager and domestic lead underwriter for PNOC-EDC. CLSA is the sole bookrunner and international underwriter.

The offer consisted of 2.61 billion shares new shares and 2.61 billion secondary shares or those owned by existing shareholders of the company.

PNOC–EDC is a wholly owned subsidiary of Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC), a state-holding company involved in the develop-

PNOC/ B2

IN THIS ISSUE
- Politics threaten the market /B2
- Vehicle sales edged up in November /B4
- DMCI ordered to put $504M in escrow /B5



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Politics threaten the market

MR. BEARBULL

Ron Nathan

I WAS EXPECTING TO SEE THE President on TV with blonde hair because when she went into hospital, the doctors told her to dye it.

A man went to see his doctor and said, "One of my testicles has turned blue." The doctor examines him and concludes that the patient will die unless he has it removed.

"Are you crazy?" asks the patient. "How could I let you do such a thing to me?" "Do you want to die," asks the doctor, at which point the patient agrees to the operation.

Two weeks later, the patient returns. "Doc, I don't know how to say this but the other one has turned blue too." Again, the doctor tells him that if he wants to live, the other testicle must be removed. The man resists at first but eventually gives in.

After another 2 weeks, the patient returns and says, "I think there is something seriously wrong with me. My penis has also turned blue."

After examining the patient, the doctor says, "If you want to live, the penis has to go too." The patient cries, "Well, how will I urinate?" "No problem," says the doctor. "We will install a catheter and a plastic pipe." So reluctantly the patient has his penis removed.

Two weeks later, the patient is hysterical. "The plastic pipe has turned blue." "Impossible," says the doctor but examines the patient more carefully. "Hmmm, I am not sure. It could be the dye from your jeans."

* * *

In the US, the market improved after the release of the payroll number for November. Employees added 132,000 jobs in November compared with a revised 79,000 in October and 25 percent more than economists expected. The unemployment rate rose to 4.5 percent from 4.4 percent but this is a small increase from an exceptionally low figure. Average hourly earnings, a major inflation component, rose by only 0.2 percent, considered benign. These figures suggest that the economy is set for a soft landing rather than a recession. The FED is not expected to change the rate when it meets tonight.

The dollar was stronger last week so gold fell back even though other base metals such as nickel and lead hit new highs. China plans to slow its economic growth next year from 10.4 percent to 9.6 percent but this is not sufficient reason to anticipate a bear market in commodities. True, the United States is slowing down and Japan's 3rd quarter grew at a disappointing 0.8 percent but China is making major internal changes.

The continual expansion rate of over 7 percent a year over a number of years has created a huge middle class, especially in Beijing and Shanghai. These young people with one-child families do not save like their parents but splurge on cars, TVs, computers, videogames, clothes and jewelry. The government, aware that its exports might slow, is encouraging the nouveau riche to splurge so that expanding consumer spending will make a greater contribution to economic growth.

The government has recently raised the minimum wage and increased spending on education, healthcare and social security so as to lessen dependence on exports and investment. Laid-off workers have found new jobs and China is also concentrating on the farming community, which has been growing at 11.65 percent year after year. Farming exports are expected to reach $30 billion this year so farmers will also have additional money to spend. China will remain a major force and will one day overtake the United States.

I felt relieved that Speaker Jose de Venecia has decided to defer plans to convene the House of Representatives into a constituent assembly by bypassing the Senate. He has given the Senate 72 hours to respond but the Senate is not taking the bait. There has been a massive turnout against JDV's idea and this includes the Catholic Church, El Shaddai, the INC and numerous opposition groups. We have enjoyed a long period of political calm and the economy has prospered.

I have written twice about the advantages of having a British-style parliament but it should be carried out through a plebiscite in the May elections. In addition to choosing a candidate, there would be a single question, "Are you in favor of a unicameral system." I am not in favor of the French system where there is a President and a Prime Minister.

In the local market, there has been a lot of activity with foreign brokers being net buyers every day. On Friday, after the Supreme Court decision in favor of Meralco, they excelled themselves by being net buyers of P662 million, P303 million in MERB and P203 million in FPH. Meralco shot up to a high of P59 and the utility is now free to set aside its P22-billion provision for potential losses. FPH and BPC moved up in sympathy. On Nov. 28, when the share price was P31, the risk factor was zero! The last time it was zero was May 23 when the shares price was P21. BPC was at zero risk on Dec. 5 when the shares were P1.66. Follow the risk factor.

Megaworld originally announced a 1 for 2 rights issue at a 50-percent discount. It has since modified it to a 2 for 5 rights issue at P1.83, a 15-percent discount. It probably has enough buyers to take up any unwanted shares.

Filinvest is selling 5 billion shares and PNOC has fixed its price at the top of the range P3.20. Presumably, this implies confidence that foreign investors will oversubscribe the issue even if local investors do not take up their 30-percent allocation.

MWC lost the bid for Maynilad Water Services to DMC and MPC. As a result, MWC fell sharply and was downgraded by one foreign broker from a BUY to a HOLD while DMC surged.

Only 3 companies made acceptable bids for Mirant and the company is asking them to raise their bids. Marubeni and Tokyo Electric have done so. Mirant is the second biggest power producer after the government and its 3 plants have a combined capacity of 2203 megawatts.

Apex Mining sent a disclosure to the PSE that major problems had been overcome and that production of 500 tons a day would start in the first quarter and 2,400 tons a day would start in the second quarter on schedule. However, the AGM has been deferred for a fourth time from Dec. 15 to Jan 18. I have been unable to contact the company.

The Treasury failed to sell its P20 billion of 5-year retail bonds available in multiples of P5,000 and will offer the remaining P12 billion, presumably at a higher rate.

ADB predicted that East Asia's economic growth would slow from 4.9 percent this year to 4.4 percent next year.

I have been unlucky with women. My first wife left me and my second wife didn't.

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
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BRANCH 123
CITY OF CALOOCAN

PETITION FOR REHABILITATION
AND SUSPENSION OF PAYMENTS
OF BENSAN INDUSTRIES, INC.,

Case No. C-050
For: Rehabilitation

BENSAN INDUSTRIES, INC.,
Petitioner,
x-----x

STAY ORDER

Before this Court is a verified Petition for Corporate Rehabilitation with prayer for a Stay Order filed by the above-named petitioner.

Briefly, the petitioner alleges that despite the fact that it has a total assets of P392,310,998.00, it has encountered temporary illiquidity problems which prevent it from paying maturing loans and other obligations. The proposed rehabilitation plan calls for Fresh Funds Infusion From Stockholders; Restructuring of Debts (Tranches A and B), Stay Order; Gradual Build Up of Capacity Utilization, Used Oil Sourcing Management Reorganization and Rehab Plan Operating Budget among other things. Consequently, the petitioner prays for the issuance of a Stay Order pending proceedings before this Court.

A careful examination of the petition shows that the same conforms substantially with Section 2, Rule 4 of the Interim Rules of Procedure on Corporate Rehabilitation (See also Supreme Court Resolution en banc in A.M. No. 00-8-10 SC). This Court therefore finds the petition to be sufficient in form and substance.

In view of the foregoing, this Court issues a Stay Order in accordance with Section 6, Rule 4 of the afore-cited Interim Rules as follows:

(1) Appointing Atty. Millard Manseguiao as rehabilitation receiver who shall be considered as an officer of the Court and who shall have the powers, duties and functions as provided in Section 14, Rule 4 of the above-cited Interim Rules. The rehabilitation receiver must post a bond in the amount of P1,000,000.00 before entering upon his powers, duties and functions and must take an oath as provided under Section 15, Rule 4 of the afore-cited Interim Rules. The petitioner is directed to serve immediately a copy of this Stay Order upon the rehabilitation receiver, Atty. Millard Manseguiao who shall manifest his acceptance or non-acceptance of his appointment not later than five (5) days from his receipt hereof.

(2) Staying enforcement of all claims, whether for money or otherwise and whether such enforcement is by Court action or otherwise against the petitioner and its guarantors and sureties not solidarily liable with the petitioner including the staying of the proceedings of collection cases filed against the petitioner and the staying of the enforcement/implementation of application/s for extra-judicial foreclosure sale/s and actual foreclosure sale/s, if any against the real and personal properties of the petitioner.

(3) Prohibiting the petitioner from selling encumbering, transferring or disposing in any manner of its properties except in the ordinary course of business.

(4) Prohibiting the petitioner from making any payment of its liabilities outstanding as at the date of filing of the petition on November 10, 2006.

(5) Prohibiting the suppliers of the petitioner from withholding supply of goods or services in the ordinary course of business for as long as the petitioner makes payments for the services and goods supplied after the issuance of this Stay Order.

(6) Directing the petitioner to pay in full and administrative expenses incurred after the issuance of this Stay Order.

The initial hearing of the petition is set on January 3, 2007 at 8:30 in the morning in this Court located at the 2nd floor of Judicial Complex Building, 10th Avenue, Grace Park, Caloocan City. In the event the initial hearing does not push through for any reason like there is no work on such date the hearing shall be reset to January 10, 2007 at 8:30 in the morning. All creditors and all interested parties including the Securities and Exchange Commission are directed to file with this Court and serve upon the petitioner a verified comment on or opposition to the petition with supporting affidavits and documents, not later than ten (10) days before the date of initial hearing as set forth above and they are put on notice that their failure to do so will bar them from participating in the proceedings before this Court. All creditors and all interested parties are further directed to secure from this Court copies of the petition and its annexes within such time as to enable them to file their verified comment on or opposition thereto and to prepare them for the initial hearing and to attain this purpose, the petitioner is ordered to file with this Court initially ten (10) additional copies of the petition and its annexes within ten (10) days from receipt hereof.

The petitioner is furthermore directed by this Court to have a copy of this Order published in the Business Section of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, Manila Bulletin and the Philippine Star considering the probable presence of creditors and interested parties in other parts of Luzon, once a week for two consecutive weeks, with the last publication effected at least three weeks prior to the date of initial hearing as set forth above at the expense of the petitioner.

Atty. Emily P. Dizon, Branch Clerk of Court of this Court is ordered to see to it that the Process Server shall serve immediately copies of this Stay Order upon: (1) Engr. Benjamin S. Santos, President and General Manager of petitioner Bensan Industries Inc., 800 Bagbaguin Road Caloocan City, (2) Ong Meneses Gonzales and Gupit Law Office (Counsel for Petitioner) Suite 1515, Cityland 10, Tower 1, 6815 Ayala Avenue, Makati City, (3) Atty. Millard Manseguiao, Diaz Murillo Dalupan, 5F Don Jacinto Building, Dela Rosa corner Salcedo, Makati City and (4) [illegible]

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Japanese group ...

From page B1

Atlanta-based Mirant decided earlier this year to divest its offshore assets and focus on its American operations.

the 735-MW Pagbilao coal-fired power plants in Pangasinan and Quezon, respectively. It also holds a 20-percent stake in the Ilijan power facility.

Its net ownership interest in

PNOC unit ...

From page B1

ment and production of various forms of energy in the Philippines.

Sources had said that of the total offer proceeds, P1.5 billion would be used for working capital, P935 million for new drilling rigs and the rehabilitation of two rigs, and the rest for the development of five steamfields. PNOC-EDC generates roughly P5-P7 billion in net income a year.

PNOC-EDC operates geothermal energy projects in Leyte, Luzon, Negros and Mindanao with a total installed capacity of 1,148 megawatts. It is also the sole active developer of geothermal energy and geothermal power projects in the country and accounts for 60 percent of the total installed geothermal energy capacity in the Philippines.

PNOC-EDC earlier said in a prospectus filed with the PSE that it has set a capital expenditure budget of roughly P2.98 billion for 2007.

Of the planned spending, P1.35 billion will go to the first phase of its North Luzon wind power project in Ilocos Norte, which is expected to produce 20 MW of electricity.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 11, 2006)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
FINANCIAL					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4	2,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	44.5	44.5	44	44	897,900
Bank of the Phil. Islands	63	63	62.5	62.5	1,597,800
China Banking Corp.	705	705	695	695	580
Citystate Savings Bank	19	19	19	19	300
Export and Ind. Bank A	0.46	0.48	0.46	0.48	3,380,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	79.5	80	79.5	80	183,200
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	51	53	51	51	1,881,800
Philippine National Bank	41	42	41	42	29,000
Rizal Comm. Banking Corp.	27	27	26.5	26.5	133,500
Security Bank Corp.	66	66	65	65.5	160,100
Union Bank of the Phil.	50	50.5	50	50.5	5,400
OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS					
Bankard Inc.	0.69	0.69	0.69	0.69	50,000
Citiseconline.Com Inc.	4.9	4.95	4.85	4.95	446,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	30.5	30.5	30.5	30.5	2,500
Manulife Financial Corp.	1640	1640	1640	1640	10
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	1.32	1.32	1.32	1.32	504,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	260	262.5	260	262.5	7,900
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2150	2165	2150	2165	1,560
Ivantage Corp.	1.46	1.52	1.46	1.52	271,000
ELECTRICITY, ENERGY, POWER & WATER					
First Gen Corp.	52	54.5	52	53.5	1,561,200
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	59	62	59	60	3,286,800
Manila Electric Co. A	53	58	52.5	52.5	3,223,900
Manila Electric Co. B	54	59.5	54	55	7,843,500
Manila Water Co. Inc.	9.9	10	9.8	9.8	6,479,000
Petron Corp.	4.1	4.15	4.05	4.05	3,984,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	10,000
Salcon Power Corp.	1.8	1.8	1.8	1.8	30,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.08	1.08	1.02	1.04	354,000
FOOD, BEVERAGE & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.6	13,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	21	21.5	21	21.5	10,000
Jollibee Foods Corp.	41	41.5	40.5	41.5	492,100
Roxas Holdings Inc.	2.85	2.85	2.65	2.65	396,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	460,000
San Miguel Corp. A	65.5	66	65	66	55,400
San Miguel Corp. B	73	73	72	72	60,900
Alliance Tuna Int'l. Inc.	2.1	2.1	1.98	2.02	1,155,000
Universal Robina Corp.	19.5	19.5	19.5	19.5	645,000
CONSTRUCTION, INFRASTRUCTURE & ALLIED SERVICES					
Southeast Asian Cement	1.02	1.18	1.02	1.16	44,340,000
Engineering Equip. Inc.	3	3.25	3	3.25	533,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	2.85	2.85	2.7	2.7	52,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	7.5	7.6	7.5	7.5	2,314,000
Republic Cement Corp.	3.95	4.05	3.95	4.05	1,358,000
CHEMICALS					
Chemrez Technologies Inc.	5.1	5.1	4.95	4.95	4,947,000
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS					
Geograce Res. Phil. Inc.	0.74	0.75	0.71	0.72	16,840,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.175	0.175	5,170,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	30,000,000
Ayala Corp.	487.5	492.5	487.5	490	435,400
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.59	0.6	320,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	6.1	6.2	6.1	6.2	1,172,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	10.75	10.75	10.75	10.75	2,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.06	0.06	0.0575	0.0575	14,700,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.8	2.8	2.75	2.8	499,000
APC Group Inc.	0.29	0.32	0.29	0.31	2,200,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0095	0.01	0.0095	0.0095	27,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.92	0.97	0.92	0.94	1,790,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.9	1.9	1.76	1.76	135,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	3	3	3	3	45,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	1.14	1.16	1.14	1.16	73,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	8.5	8.5	8.5	8.5	1,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	2.14	2.34	2.14	2.26	69,853,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	6.2	6.5	6.1	6.3	3,734,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	3.65	3.7	3.6	3.6	1,244,000
House of Investments Inc.	1.92	1.96	1.9	1.92	1,648,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	9.3	9.3	9.2	9.2	353,000
Keppel Holdings	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1,000
Medco Holdings	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	200,000
Magnum Holdings Inc.	4.5	4.6	4.1	4.25	514,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	1.68	1.68	1.6	1.62	685,000
Pacifica	0.019	0.02	0.019	0.02	3,200,000
Prime Orion Phils. Inc.	0.19	0.195	0.19	0.195	240,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.64	0.64	0.64	0.64	650,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.145	0.145	0.145	0.145	2,500,000
SM Investments Corp.	292.5	297.5	292.5	297.5	453,100
Seafront Resources Corp.	1.7	1.72	1.56	1.66	2,429,000
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co.	0.175	0.185	0.175	0.175	2,250,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.13	0.135	0.13	0.135	360,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	14.5	14.75	14.25	14.75	8,442,700
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.48	0.48	0.48	0.48	50,000
Belle Corp.	1.12	1.14	1.12	1.14	684,000
A Brown Company Inc.	1.78	1.78	1.66	1.68	2,677,000
Cityland Development Corp.	1.6	1.64	1.6	1.64	165,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.39	0.4	0.39	0.4	2,600,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	3.3	3.4	3.2	3.4	1,584,000
Cebu Prop. Vent. A	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.9	20,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.32	5,010,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.54	0.54	0.53	0.54	17,380,000
Edsa Prop. Holdings Inc.	1.6	1.6	1.6	1.6	1,000,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.06	3,000,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.72	1.82	1.72	1.82	15,015,000
Gotesco Land Inc.	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.11	400,000
Interport Res.	0.007	0.0075	0.007	0.0075	30,000,000
Interport Res. B	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	48,000,000
Keppel Phils. Prop. Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	216,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.49	0.49	0.44	0.47	14,660,000
Megaworld Corp.	2.3	2.34	2.28	2.3	97,013,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	100,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	16.25	16.75	16.25	16.5	1,848,000
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.66	0.66	0.63	0.64	34,070,000
SM Development Corp.	2.34	2.34	2.34	2.34	4,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	9.8	9.9	9.8	9.9	2,651,000
Suntrust Home Dev. Inc.	0.57	0.58	0.57	0.58	560,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	300,000
MEDIA					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	21	21.5	20.5	20.5	111,200
TELECOMMUNICATIONS					
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.62	1.68	1.62	1.66	8,081,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	1255	1255	1245	1250	16,640
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	6	6	5.7	5.8	6,697,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	2455	2455	2440	2450	77,000
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY					
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	2,580,000
Imperial Res.	0.017	0.018	0.017	0.018	1,200,000
Ionics Inc.	2.04	2.04	2.02	2.04	121,000
IPVG Corp.	4.55	4.7	4	4.1	2,780,000
ISM Communications Corp.	0.0575	0.0575	0.055	0.0575	1,900,000
Transpacific Broadband	5.5	5.8	5.4	5.8	448,000
Philweb Corp.	0.032	0.032	0.032	0.032	35,400,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	4.15	4.15	4.15	4.15	5,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	19	19.25	19	19.25	764,200
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	300,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.34	1.34	1.34	1.34	10,000
HOTEL & LEISURE					
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	2.22	2.22	2.16	2.18	1,600,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.32	0.34	0.32	0.34	300,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.58	0.58	0.57	0.58	3,370,000
EDUCATION					
Centro Escolar University	9	9	8.8	9	64,000
iPeople Inc.	3	3.1	3	3.1	293,000
DIVERSIFIED SERVICES					
Easycall Phils. Inc.-Com	3	3	3	3	3,000
Macroasia Corp.	2.14	2.14	2.12	2.14	413,000
Paxys Inc.	17.75	18	17.5	17.75	586,200
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	6.2	6.2	6.1	6.1	1,278,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	6.4	6.7	6.4	6.6	372,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	52,800,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	8.3	8.3	8.1	8.3	1,459,000
Benguet Corp. A	9	9.3	9	9.3	60,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	2.06	2.06	2.06	2.06	11,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.245	0.26	0.24	0.26	3,830,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co. B	0.26	0.27	0.25	0.27	8,700,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.02	0.021	0.02	0.021	21,000,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.022	0.022	0.022	0.022	1,600,000
Omico Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	158,000,000
Philex Mining Corp.	4.25	4.25	4.1	4.1	4,077,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	19	19.5	19	19.5	27,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.58	0.65	0.58	0.63	13,810,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.99	1.24	0.99	1.24	27,360,000
OIL					
Basic Petroleum Corp.	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.27	2,850,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	57,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.011	0.011	0.011	0.011	123,600,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	1	1.08	0.99	1.02	1,970,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	1	1.06	1	1.04	850,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	10	10.25	10	10	223,900

Stocks close higher

From page B1

However, political concerns

The Philippine Stock Exchange

they said.

CURRENCIES

December 11, 2006 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.757346	1.000000	49.6040
Japan	Yen	0.006509	0.008594	0.4263
United Kingdom	Pound	1.479627	1.953700	96.9113
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.097438	0.128657	6.3819
Switzerland	Franc	0.628503	0.829876	41.1652
Canada	Dollar	0.659078	0.870246	43.1677
Singapore	Dollar	0.490002	0.646998	32.0937
Australia	Dollar	0.597229	0.788581	39.1168
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.009036	2.652731	131.5861
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.202110	0.266866	13.2376
Brunei	Dollar	0.488422	0.644912	31.9902
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000083	0.000110	0.0055
Thailand	Baht	0.021322	0.028153	1.3965
UAE	Dirham	0.206344	0.272457	13.5150
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.320400	65.4971
Korea	Won	0.000823	0.001087	0.0539
China	Yuan**	0.096792	0.127804	6.3396
Brazil	Real	0.354696	0.468340	23.2315
Denmark	Kroner	0.134131	0.177107	8.7852
India	Rupee	0.017008	0.022457	1.1140
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.213578	0.282008	13.9887
Mexico	New Peso	0.070000	0.092428	4.5848
New Zealand	Dollar	0.524696	0.692809	34.3661
South Africa	Rand	0.107677	0.142177	7.0525
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.023389	0.030883	1.5319

Source: Reuters' forex closing prices as of NY Time—Dec. 8, 2006
* Various banks in Bahrain as quoted in Reuters' Screen
** Asian Time Closing Rate as of 08-Dec-06

Sun Life mutual fund sales up

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SUN LIFE'S MUTUAL FUND sales hit a record P1.08 billion in November this year, Sun Life said in a statement yesterday.

"We are glad that more and more people are becoming aware of Sun Life's expertise in managing mutual fund investments," said Sun Life president Lorenzo V. Tan.

Tan said its "Prosperity Balanced Fund"—which invests in stocks and fixed income securities—made up for over half of the company's monthly gross sales.

The stock index, the barometer of investor confidence, has surged more than 30 percent so far this year.

The Sun Life Prosperity Balanced Fund generated a year-to-date net yield of 29.8 percent as of November.

Meanwhile, the Prosperity Equity Fund, which is considered Sunlife's most aggressive peso-denominated fund, provided a net yield of 37 percent within the same period.

Sun Life Asset Management Company chief operating officer Henry Joseph Herrera said: "Even the other peso and dollar denominated funds of Sun Life performed well in terms of year-to-date returns."

The Sun Life Prosperity Funds is the biggest family of mutual funds in the Philippines.

It is managed and distributed by Sun Life Asset Management Company, a member of the Sun Life Financial group of companies, a leading international financial services organization.

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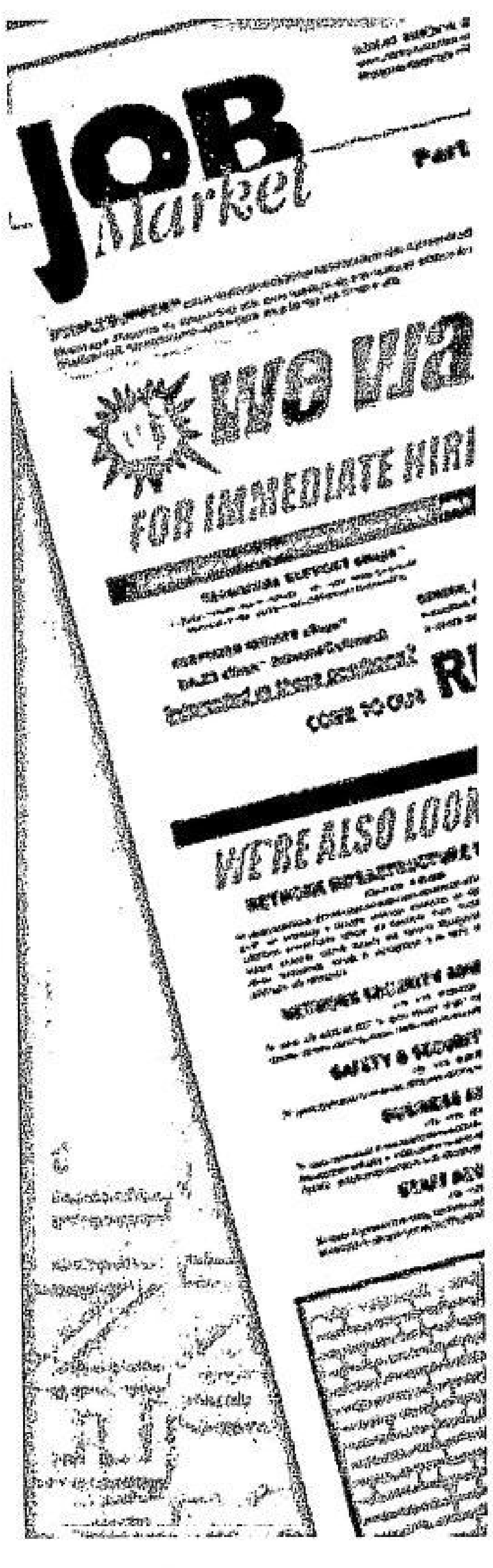
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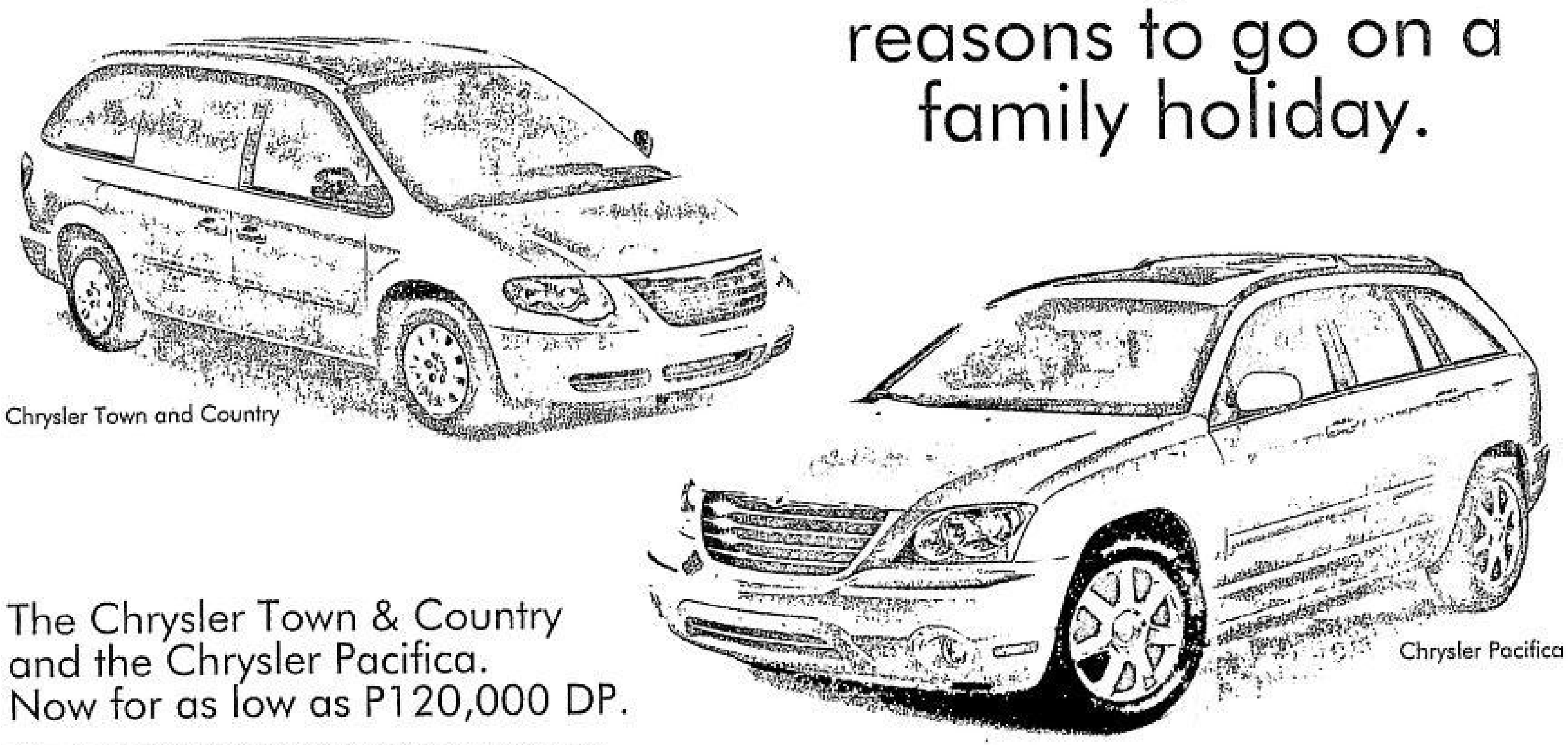

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Oh my gas

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

LET'S GO STRAIGHT TO THE point: What are the chances that we can look forward to much lower electricity rates in our lifetime?

All right, from the looks of it, it's not that great! Yes, Bergonia, I'm afraid we will have to bear our high power rates, which are still the second highest in the whole of Asia, for a really long time.

For one, this cute administration of Gloriaetta—rulers of the land for 10 long years, which is actually enough time for our neighbors like Vietnam to overtake us—already knows what should be done.

Well, a good part of the reforms is already spelled out in the Epira law, right?

It's just that the Palace does not seem to be in the mood to implement it.

Now, the reigning patriarch of a rich family—none other than Oscar Lopez, chair and CEO of Benpres, the holding company of the Lopez group, which is the biggest private player in the power industry today—also has some bright ideas on how to cut our power rates.

The question is, daddy-o, does the Lopez group have enough clout in this resurrected but still cute administration of Gloriaetta? Hmm.

By Oscar Lopez's own admission, when he talked to foreign media people recently, the Lopez group always has "tension" in its relationship with the government, partly because of its "presence in media."

In other words, it's possible that Oscar's ideas may not only fall on deaf ears, but also go straight to the trash can.

For instance, to determine how best to lower our power rates, Oscar Lopez suggested that we should try to find out why the rates are high, in the first place.

In 1960s, before the 14-year Marcos martial rule, when private company still operated all the power plants, Lopez said that Meralco had the lowest power rates in Asia—even lower than the rates in 43 of the 50 states in the United States.

The Lopez group of course owned Meralco then.

Today, the government monopoly Napocor still controls more than 70 percent of the country's power production. Get the picture?

And those same government officials who are running Napocor, of course, keep on blaming the high cost of imported fuel, such as oil and coal in the world market, for our power rate woes.

Tell you what: Oscar Lopez does not seem buy any of it! Look, Mamonluk, some 70 percent of our electricity actually already comes from what he termed as "indigenous" sources, such as geothermal (underground steam) and natural gas (i.e., the Camago-Malampaya project). The fuel is not imported, it's homemade.

And so, the main cause of our high electricity rates must not be the high cost of imported oil and coal. They only account for 30 percent of our power, forgodsakes.

The sad thing is, according to Oscar Lopez, homemade electricity becomes more expensive than the imported version because of—guess what—the tax system.

For example, the government collects "royalty" of almost P2 per kilowatt-hour (kwh) of power generated from the Camago-Malampaya natural gas.

By scrapping the "royalty," our rates can go down by more than P1 per kwh easily.

Yet Napocor imports coal with tax breaks, if not tax-free. Oh, my gosh, can you believe that? The system therefore creates distortion. Imported coal produces electricity that is ARTIFICIALLY cheaper than the homemade electricity from natural gas. Wow!

And why do we insist on importing coal. Well, for one, it's good for some people in the government who make something on the side from big coal contracts overseas.

The Department of Energy itself estimates that we can readily tap 10 more huge gas fields. We just have to do something about the tax system.

Such a distortion, as a matter of fact, is one of the reasons why Napocor became the model of corruption and inefficiency in all the government-run businesses. So much so that Napocor single-handedly buried the whole country in debt.

Congress wanted to get rid of Napocor through the Epira law, which orders Napocor to sell its power plants. And is this being done at all? Maybe in our next life!

* * *

Two years ago, the National Press Club (NPC) made a deal with the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council, or HUDCC, then headed by Secretary Mike "The Glib" Defensor.

It was usufruct deal for a sizeable lot on C-5 in Taguig, across the high-end real estate project called McKinley Hills.

Under the deal, the NPC was to use the land for a housing project for NPC members at no cost. Yes, the NPC would not have to pay the government even a single cross-eyed centavo.

The NPC only had to find a developer that would invest in the housing project for a modest profit. You know, the usual "joint-venture!"

Well and good. The NPC never had any means to take on a housing project on its own.

But here is the thing, manong. In 2004, the NPC also made a deal with a company called Fourth Estate, transferring all its rights over the property. Also for nothing!

In other words, Fourth Estate now has the usufruct on the lot, whose usufruct used to belong to NPC. Fourth Estate also thought it wise to hire a contractor to do the housing project right away.

Now under a new board, however, the NPC wants to change the terms of the deal with Fourth Estate. If it is not too much to ask of Fourth Estate, the new NPC board wanted a share of the profits from the project.

Well, under the 2004 deal, Fourth Estate would get to keep all the profit from selling the housing units to the very same NPC members. Nice, no?

Appetite stays strong for risk-free T-bonds

YIELD OF THREE-YEAR TREASURY bonds fell to 5.647 percent yesterday, as banks scrambled for the virtually risk-free debt instruments as the government nears the closing of its debt offering program for the year.

The bonds auctioned off yesterday, which were more than three times over-subscribed, were a re-issue of the benchmark 3-year bonds sold last February.

The new rate for the 3-year bonds was 272.8 basis points lower than the 8.5 percent recorded in February.

Appetite for the government securities was strong, as volume of bids reached P25.02 billion compared with the government's debt offering of only P6 billion.

The Bureau of the Treasury's auction committee accepted P6 billion worth of bids, raising in full the government's borrowing schedule for yesterday.

"My cash flow position is intact," National Treasurer Omar Cruz told reporters in a briefing after yesterday's auction. "If they (investors) don't take the bonds, they will lose supply."

Cruz said that yesterday's auction was the second to the last securities issuance for the year.

Today, the government will float P6 billion worth of 7-year bonds—its last for 2006.

The huge demand for government securities was attributed to the high level of liquidity in the market.

Cruz said there were P6 billion worth of Treasury bills and bonds that will mature this week and that will add up to the liquidity level. Some investors reinvest proceeds of their investments in T-bills and bonds in government securities.

The borrowings sourced by the government from the domestic capital market this year, through the issuance of Treasury bills and bonds, amount to P247 billion.

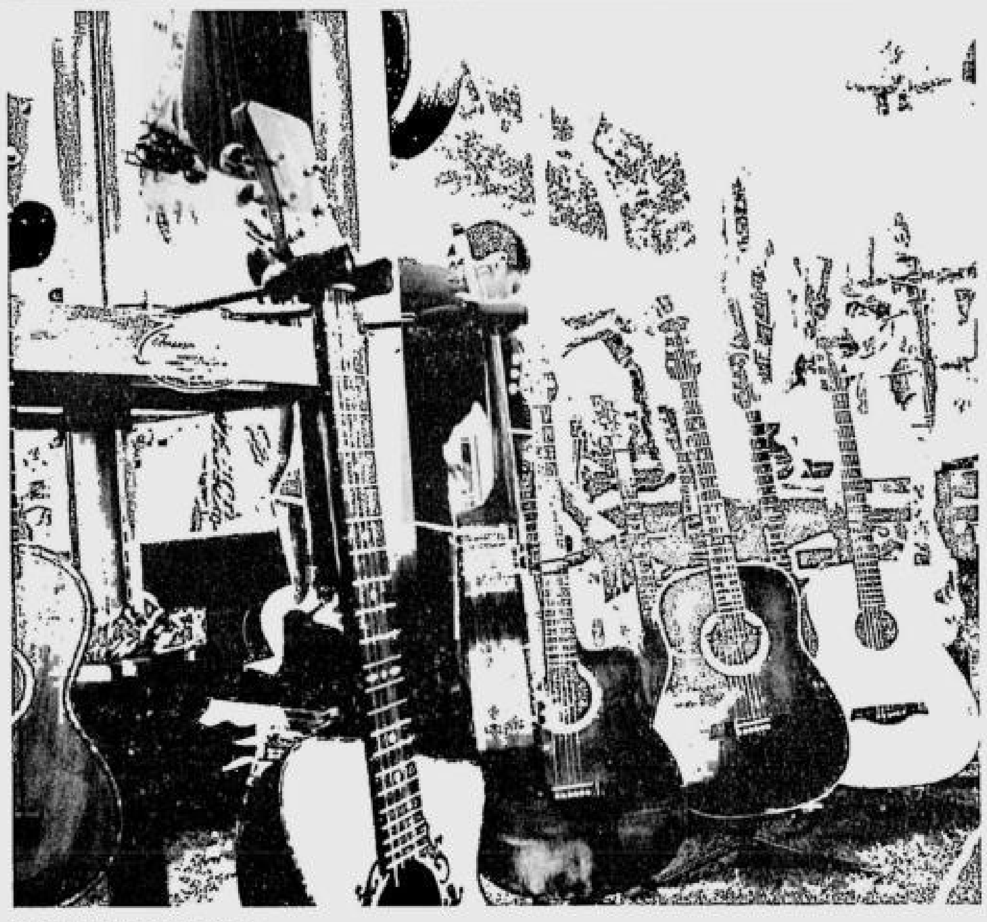
The BTr earlier announced that the government's domestic borrowings for next year were set at only P208 billion. Cruz said the decline in the government's domestic borrowing requirements was anchored on the projected decline in its budget deficit.

The deficit is targeted to be reduced to only P63 billion next year from the projected ~~P115~~ billion or less this year.

Government borrowings to be sourced from the international capital market and multilateral creditors next year will amount to $2.47 billion. Of the amount, $1.466 billion will be in the form of official development assistance, while the rest will come from the issuance of sovereign bonds in the foreign capital market. *Michelle V. Remo*

Vehicle sales edged up in Nov.

Assemblers this year hope to exceed overall turnover in 2005



HIGHLY STRUNG

An array of Mactan guitars draws a crowd at the Shangri-La's Mactan Island Resort and Spa. It is business as usual for skilled traders in Cebu—site of the 12th Asean Summit that has been reset for next month.

JUNJIE MENDOZA/CEBU DAILY NEWS

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE GROWTH RATE OF MOTOR VEHICLE sales slid back to positive at 1.6 percent as of end-November, as the sector revs up past government policy speed bumps this year.

Local assemblers are now expecting to exceed last year's turnover of 97,063 units.

Elizabeth H. Lee, president of the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers Association of the Philippines (Campi), said that sales had suffered due to the 70-percent cap on value-added tax input credits and as the industry awaited a Supreme Court ruling regarding the ban on used vehicle importation.

"We are happy to post a positive growth rate this year," Lee said.

However, Lee said that the 100,000-unit sale mark, which assemblers considered to be a sign of continued growth, would not be possible until next year.

In a joint report with the Truck Manufacturers Association (TMA), Campi said a total of 89,391 units were sold in the 11 months to November against 87,996 units in the same period of 2005.

In November, the companies sold a total of 9,037 units, which was well above the monthly average of 8,100 units.

Also, November sales grew by 9.3 percent compared to the same month of last year, largely due to a number of fleet deliveries, some new model introduction, and intensive seasonal year-end promos and marketing activities.

"December sales are expected to do well (and) we should be ending the year with a growth overall," the report said.

As of the end-November, passenger car sales went up 7.2 percent to 34,752 units from 32,425 units between comparative periods.

On the other hand, overall turnover of commercial vehicles—comprised of Asian utility vehicles, light commercial vehicles, light trucks, and trucks and buses—decreased by 1.7 percent to 54,639 units from 55,571 units.

Sale of AUVs went down 7.4 percent to 22,231 units, while the other three subcategories of CVs showed improvements.

Sale of light commercial vehicles—pick-ups, vans, compact sports utility vehicles—went up 2.4 percent to 30,208 units.

Sale of light trucks were up 7.8 percent to 1,550 units; while trucks and buses increased 4.3 percent to 650 units.

In terms of total sales, Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. kept the lead with 38.2 percent of the market. It sold 34,118 units the previous 11 months, up by 6.8 percent.

Honda Cars Philippines Inc. stayed at second with 14.1 percent of the market with sales reaching 12,564 units or 41 percent higher.

Mitsubishi Motors Philippines Corp. held third place with 12.5 percent of the market, but sold 11,157 units or a decrease of 7 percent.

RP allows entry of meat from France

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE PHILIPPINES WILL NOW ALLOW the entry of beef and other meat products from France, effectively lifting the six-year-old ban imposed at the height of the mad cow scare.

In memorandum order No. 33 issued on Nov. 2, the Department of Agriculture said the decision to again allow the entry of meat products from cattle farms in France came about after the local authorities determined that the risks of contamination from bovine spongiform encelopathy (BSE), or mad cow disease, were "negligible."

"The government of France was able to institute measures to contain the outbreak of BSE and ensure food safety in France," said Agriculture Undersecretary Jesus Emmanuel Paras in the memo he recently issued.

However, the DA said the importation of meat products from cattle farms in France are subject to a number of conditions.

The Philippines said it would accept only deboned and deglanded beef from cattle not older than 30 months, and that the meat should be devoid of any nerves and other BSE-specified risk materials as certified by the French government.

The Philippines has likewise specified that the beef should not at anytime and in any manner get in contact, or mixed, with beef coming from cattle older than 30 months.

With the lifting of the ban, traders may now be able to secure import permits for the importation of the beef products.

The ban on the importation of meat products derived from live cattle, goat and sheep was imposed by the government in 2000 following the outbreak of BSE in Europe.

PDIC to convert UCPB loans into capital

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE PHILIPPINE DEPOSIT INSURANCE Corp. wants to convert up to P12 billion worth of United Coconut Planters Bank's remaining loans into hybrid instruments qualifying as tier 1 capital, once the bank completes its P20-billion bad asset disposal plan.

PDIC executive vice president Cristina Orbeta told reporters that the conversion of the banks' loans would be subject to certain conditions, including the bulk sale of UCPB's soured assets under the special purpose vehicle program.

The conversion of the remaining loans into hybrid instruments was proposed by UCPB as a measure to shore up capital. The bank hopes to be turning in profits in three or four years.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas recently allowed banks to use hybrid tier 1 instruments, such as perpetual bonds, for the purpose of complying with the Basel 2 capital adequacy requirements.

These hybrid tier 1 capital instruments are different from tier 2, or subordinated debt, in the sense that they usually have longer maturity and share in potential losses or profits.

For its part, UCPB has tapped global accounting firm Ernst & Young as financial advisor for the planned sale of another P20-billion tranche of bad assets next year.

It will be the second time that UCPB will conduct a SPV sale.

In 2005, the bank successfully sold P11.5 billion of its nonperforming loans to US-based asset management company Avenue Asia Special Situation Fund.

UCPB has long proposed the conversion of the remaining loans to PDIC. But the latter wanted the BSP to share in the cost of the transaction.

The existing SPV Law aims to help banks get rid of their bad assets by waiving some of the taxes and reducing fees usually collected in the sale or transfer of assets.

It waives the documentary stamp tax, capital gains tax and expanded value added tax. It likewise reduces the registration/transfer fees by 50 percent.

The plan to dispose more of its bad assets is part of UCPB's restructuring, in line with its 10-year financial assistance agreement with Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. inked in July 2003.

From a high of P41.3 billion in December 2002, UCPB has slashed its non-performing asset level to P28.9 billion at the end of 2005.

With the asset sale, UCPB expects its soured assets to go down to P27.8 billion by the end of 2006, and even further down to P7.8 billion in 2007.

The NPA eyed for disposal next year will consist of about P6.29 billion of nonperforming loans, and about P13.75 billion of real and other properties acquired (ROPA).

UCPB expects its second SPV sale to be concluded as early as the second quarter of 2007 or by the third quarter of that year at the latest.

RP's outstanding debt declines to ₱3.9T in Sept

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S OUTSTANDING debt slightly declined to P3.928 trillion in September from a month ago, as it continued to prepay some of its liabilities that have yet to mature.

If divided among the country's estimated population of 85 million, each person will have a share of P46,212 of the government's debt burden.

Contingent liabilities, or debts incurred by state-owned firms that carry a sovereign guarantee, reached P552.7 billion in September. This was 1.8 percent lower than the P563 billion recorded as of end-August.

The Bureau of the Treasury yesterday reported that as of September the debt stock, excluding contingent liabilities, was 0.7 percent lower than the P3.954 trillion recorded as of end-August.

Of the September debt figure, the bigger share of P2.164 trillion were sourced from domestic creditors while the remaining P1.764 trillion were from foreign lenders.

Because foreign borrowings expose the borrower to foreign exchange risks, which could further bloat its debts, the government has adopted the policy of borrowing more from domestic sources of credit rather than foreign.

The government borrows domestically through the issuance of Treasury bills and bonds. Foreign borrowings are done either through the flotation of sovereign bonds in the international capital market or by tapping official development assistance.

National Treasurer Omar Cruz told reporters that the month-on-month decline in the debt stock was partly attributed to the appreciation of the peso, and largely through debt swaps.

Appreciation of the peso trims down the cost of the government's foreign borrowings because it makes foreign-denominated debts cheaper in peso terms.

In doing debt swaps, the government taps the capital market to borrow at lower cost, and use the proceeds to pay off yet-to-mature obligations that have higher interest rates.

Of the government's P1.764-trillion foreign debt, P1.1 trillion were sourced commercially by floating bonds in the international capital market, the rest were direct loans such as those in the form of ODAs.

Cruz said that next year, the share of ODAs in the government's total foreign borrowings will be bigger than that of commercial loans. This is to keep the government's cost of borrowings cheaper, as ODAs impose a significantly lower interest rate than the capital market.

The country's biggest source of ODA are the Japan Bank for International Cooperation, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

The government intends to borrow $2.466 billion from foreign sources and P208 billion from the domestic capital market next year to help fund its expenditure programs for 2007.

Before, the government would usually undertake heavy borrowings each year mostly to pay off its maturing obligations. This resulted in the rise of its debt stock.

DMCI ordered to put $504M in escrow

MWSS wants payment for gov't stake in Maynilad in special account by Dec. 27

By Christine A. Gaylican

THE METROPOLITAN WATERWORKS AND Sewerage System (MWSS) has directed DMCI MPIC Water Co. to put its $504-million total payment for the government's 84-percent stake in Maynilad Water Services Inc. in an escrow account by Dec. 27.

DMCI-MPIC won the bidding for the government's majority stake in the original west-zone concessionaire, and is a 50-50 joint venture between DMCI Holdings Inc. and Metro Pacific Investments Corp.

MWSS Deputy Administrator Macra Cruz said the disposition of the amount has yet to be discussed, but it should be in an escrow account as assurance that DMCI-MPIC will meet its obligations.

"As the winning bidder, DMCI-MPIC is required to execute the Transaction Documents and to submit the MWSS Closing Condition not later than December 27," said DMCI vice president and CFO Herbert M. Consunji in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

According to the new capital restructuring program to be filed before the Securities and Exchange Commission, DMCI-MPIC Water Company, as the new majority owner and creditor, has the right over 1.238 billion Class A shares.

Some 236 million are assigned as common Class B shares. The French company represented by the French firm Suez Environment still owns 16 percent of the voting stock.

According to Suez Environment's representative Jacques Letondot, the company has no plans of selling its stake and "is glad to have a new partner."

The winning bidder will take over and continue operations of the west zone for the remaining years of the 25-year concession.

The winning bidder will also have to assume Maynilad's obligations under a "debt and capital restructuring agreement" with MWSS.

The Lopez group originally won in the bidding of the west zone concession in 1997.

But after almost six years of operations, it filed for court rehabilitation due to unsettled foreign loans, which were assumed by MWSS.

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NOTICE OF FILING OF APPLICATION/S FOR ALIEN EMPLOYMENT PERMIT/S (AEP/S)

Notice is hereby given that the following companies/employers have filed with this Regional Office application/s for Alien Employment Permit/s.

Name and address of Company/Employer	Name of Foreign National	Position
NCC CHEN LI INT'L. TRADING INC. 422 Numancia St., Binondo, Manila	Yaling Chen	Operations Manager
EXPORT AND INDUSTRY BANK, INC. Export Bank Plaza cor. Chino Roces St., and Sen. G. Puyat Ave., Makati City	Sai Chong Cheng	Senior Vice President of Service Delivery Management Sector
UNITED PHILIPPINES DRILLING CO., INC. Unit 818, Pioneer Highlands, South Condo., Pioneer cor. Madison St., Mandaluyong City	Andrew James Mcinnes	Drilling Supervisor
TAKENAKA CORP.-PHIL. BRANCH 18/F, Tower 2, The Enterprise Center, 6766 Ayala Ave., Makati City	Masayuki Hannya	Construction Manager
EIKOH TRADING COMPANY, INC. Unit 1005 Cityland 10, Tower I, H.V. dela Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City	Shuichi Ikeda	Executive Director
EXCELGOLD, INC. CS2 King Center, No. 57 Sgt. Rivera St., Quezon City	Cheng-Lung Chien	General Manager
KANEJIN CORPORATION 3/F Rm. 23 B Legaspi Towers 300, Roxas Blvd., Malate, Manila	Masaya Nagatomi	Sales Manager
SAMM SUNG GLOBAL CO. Unit 34-C Pearl of the Orient Tower, 1240 Roxas Blvd., cor. Padre Faura St., Ermita, Manila	Seunghoon Yoo	Account Executive
MULTITASK TRADING CORPORATION 20D Aquino St., 3rd Ave., Grace Park, Caloocan City	Zhiping Wu	Vice President for Operation
IBM BUSINESS SERVICES INC. 18/F Cyberone Mall, Eastwood City, Libis, Quezon City	Larry Dale Huffman	Project Executive
GUANGZE TRADING CORP. No. 2 Azucena St., Letre, Malabon, Metro Manila	Jianping Guo	Import Manager
KUMON PHILS., INC. 19/F Philamlife Tower, 8767 Paseo de Roxas, Makati City	Norihiro Nakamura	President and General Manager
TOTAL (PHILIPPINES) CORPORATION 31/F Export Bank Plaza cor. Sen. Gil Puyat & Chino Roces Ave., Makati City	Marc Marie Michel De Guilhem De Lataillade	LPG Manager
SIEMENS, INC. 17F Salcedo Tower, 169 H.V. Dela Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati City	Aysogul Goren	Continuous Improvement Manager
KORYO PHYSICAL HEALTH SERVICE, INC. G/F Renaissance Bldg., Meralco Ave., Ugong, Pasig City	Kyeoungjun Song	Operations Manager
BEAUTY-LOOM MANUFACTURING INC. Beauty-Loom Bldg., Market Avenue, Maybunga, Pasig City	Mohan Sugnomal Devnani	Sales Manager for Sales and Marketing
DOO WON SJ CONSULTANCY CORPORATION # 3 Aurora Arcade, Isidora Hills, Holy Spirit, Quezon City	Hyun Jun Choi	Operation Manager
MISNET, INC. 27/F Trident Tower, 312 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City	Geoffrey Booth	Software Quality Assurance Consultant
JIANMEI TRADING LTD. CO. 563 Juan Luna St., Binondo, Manila	Zhence Wang	Asst. Manager
JIANMEI TRADING LTD. CO. 563 Juan Luna St., Binondo, Manila	Yayuan Chen	Manager
ST. JUDE COLLEGE, INC. Don Quijote St., cor. Dimasalang St., Sampaloc, Manila	Jing Su	College Professor
HARLE PHILIPPINES, INC. Unit 10-L Burgundy Corporate Tower, 252 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati City	Wolfgang Kurt Harle	Vice President and Chairman

LOURDES M. TRASMONTE
Regional Director

(PDI – December 12, 2006)

Republic of the Philippines
PHILIPPINE HEALTH INSURANCE CORPORATION
PhilHealth Regional Office IX
BGIDC Corporate Center, Ground, 2nd and 3rd Floors
Governor Lim Avenue, Zamboanga City
Tel. Nos. 992-3569, 992-1910 Telefax 992-2739

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, PhilHealth Regional Office IX, Zamboanga City, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project : **LEASE OF OFFICE SPACE**
Location : Zamboanga City
Brief Description :

1. Minimum office space requirement is eight hundred eighty (880) square meters with a ground floor area of at least two hundred thirty (230) square meters
2. With elevator if made up of more than two (2) storeys
3. With adequate comfort rooms
4. With parking space that can accommodate at least twenty (20) cars and forty (40) motorcycles
5. Located along the road within the city proper
6. Free water supply
7. With installed automatic fire sprinkler system, fire hydrants and fire extinguishers and with adequate fire exits
8. Available electrical connections capable of handling an adequate number of air conditioning units (window type and floor mounted) suitable to the size of the office space
9. With installed electric meter and lights
10. Available telephone connections
11. With network cable set-up capability
12. With Wide Area Network (WAN) connection from PLDT
13. With stand-by generator to supply power for all office equipment and airconditioning units

Approved Budget for the Contract : Four Million Two Hundred Fifty Five Thousand Pesos (P4,255,000.00)
Contract Duration : February 1, 2007 to December 31, 2008

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding (largest single contract). The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bid Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed as follows:

Activities	Schedule
1. Date of Publication	December 12 & 19, 2006
2. Issuance of Bid Documents	December 12, 2006
3. Pre-bid Conference	December 22, 2006 @ 1:00 p.m.
4. Last Submission of Bids	January 8, 2007 @ 12:00 noon
5. Opening of Bids and Bid Evaluation	January 8, 2007 @ 1:00 p.m.
6. Post-qualification	January 15, 2007
7. Notice of Award	January 22, 2007

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidder upon payment of a non-refundable amount of Two Thousand Pesos (Php 2,000.00) to the Cashier of PRO IX.

The PRO IX assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

(Sgd.) DR. ROSANNA P. PARAGUYA
Chairperson, BAC PRO IX

(PDI – December 12 & 19, 2006)

ANECO
AGUSAN DEL NORTE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
Km. 2, J.C. Aquino Avenue, Butuan City
Tel Nos. (085) 341-9034; (085) 341-7935; Fax No. (085) 342-6000

INVITATION TO BID

The Agusan del Norte Electric Cooperative, Inc. (ANECO) wishes to invite interested parties to BID for the supply of the following:

A. Distribution Transformer (brand new - preferably Philec brand)

3 kva	20 units
5 kva	20 units
10 kva	20 units
15 kva	20 units
25 kva	10 units

		ABC
B. Boom Truck (Head Nissan) 6.5 capacity	1 unit	P 550,000.00
C. Self Loading Truck (Isuzu Forward)	1 unit	P 500,000.00

Opening of bid proposals will be conducted on December 22, 2006 at ANECO Conference Room at 2:00P.M.

ANECO reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any minor defect in the proposal and accept the offer that will be evaluated to be the most advantageous to the cooperative.

(Sgd.) RODOLFO L. RANOCO
BAC Chairman

Noted: (Sgd.) HORACIO T. SANTOS
General Manager

(PDI - December 11 & 12, 2006)

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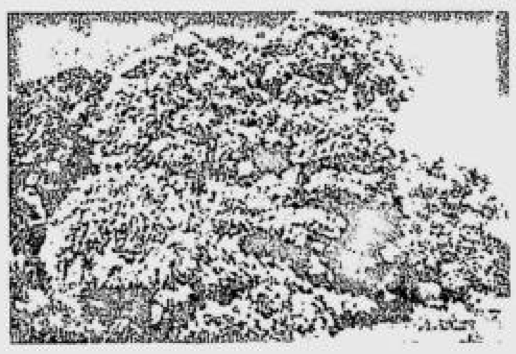
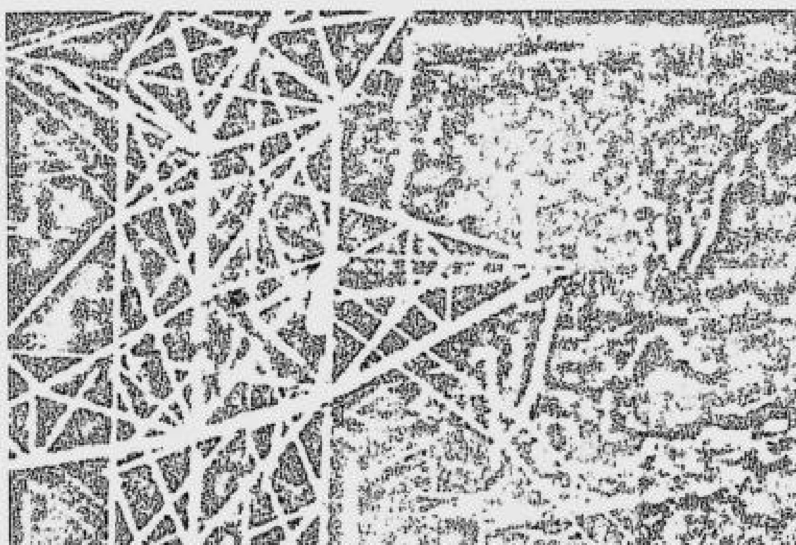
GUIMARAS MANGO BLOOMS

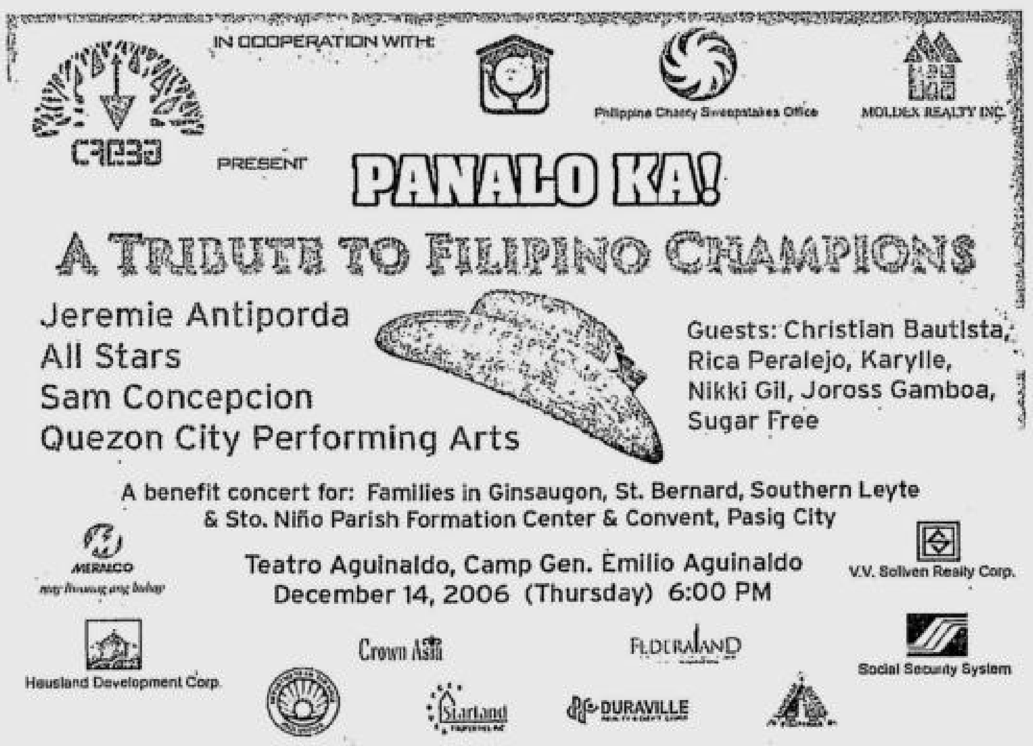


The mango tree in full bloom in Nueva Valencia in Guimaras reflects the tenacity of the people of Guimaras and their desire to emerge from the destruction caused by the oil spill and regain their prominence as the "mango country" of the Philippines. During the height of the oil-spill, the affected towns of Guimaras sourced most of their rice requirements from the National Food Authority where sales reached as high as 200 bags per day. Aside from Nueva Valencia, the oil spill affected the towns of Sibunag, Jordan and San Lorenzo.



TRANSCO PILFERERS

AS TRANSMISSION LINE GANGS FROM NORTH Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao help in restoring power in the Bicol region, the National Transmission Corporation (TransCo) has appealed to local government units and the general public to help thwart the theft of transmission lines and tower parts particularly those downed by the recent spate of typhoons. Pilferers of steel tower parts and cables have hampered power restoration efforts of TransCo and electric cooperatives in typhoon-ravaged areas of the region. Information on looting incidents and thieves in the region may be reported through the following numbers: (02) 520-8292 / (049) 839-0657 or toll free 1-80010-8726726 (TRANSCO). Caught on photo are three suspected looters atop a TransCo steel tower in Pili, Camarines Sur and another group of suspected looters in waist-deep waters apparently "working" on a collapsed TransCo steel tower in Minalabac, Camarines Sur.



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NAME OF DECEASED	PLACE OF VIEWING	INTERMENT/CREMATION	
		DATE & TIME	PLACE
Patria "Pat" Medalla Alvarez	Christ the King Greenmeadows, Q.C.	12/14/2006 after the 8:00 a.m. Mass	Heritage Park Crematorium
Cynthia Mendoza Maddela	Chapel A2	12-Dec-06 after the 8:00 a.m. Mass	Crypt of the Christ the King Church Greenmeadows, Q.C.
Larry B. Pastor, Sr.	Chapel-D	12/16/2006 9:00 a.m.	Eternal Gardens Memorial Park

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OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS: ❶ Copy of Death Certificate
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)
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"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
— 2 Corinthians 5:8

Our Dearly Beloved Tatay

ATTY. CORNELIO J. SILLANO

(April 1, 1931 – December 7, 2006)
of Pasay City and Guiguinto, Bulacan

Now rest peacefully in the infinite warmth and embrace of the Lord at the age of 75.

He is survived by his wife **Alicia G. Abada**

His children:
Arch. Cornelio Jr., **Atty. Luis Ch.**, **Ceasar**, **Christopher Alexander** and **Aristotle**;

His daughters-in-law:
Grace, **Teresa**, **Anna Lissa**, **Teresita** and **Marie Paz**;

His grandchildren: **Julian Cornel**, **Grace Anne**, **Raymond Alizen**, **Manuel Alfonso**, **Trina Alisa**, **Maria Celisa**, **Miguel Rafael** (†), **Coralyn Anne**, **Aristotle Jr.**, and **Mikaela Maris**;

His brother, sisters, nephews, nieces, grandchildren and other relatives

His remains lie in state at Capilla de la Virgen, Santuario de San Antonio Parish,
Mckinley Road, Forbes Park, Makati.

His remains will be transferred to the family Estate, Alcor Reso,
Tiaong, Guiguinto Bulacan in the afternoon of December 10, 2006, Sunday.

Necrological Services:

Saturday, December 9	7:00 P.M.	-	Capilla de la Virgen, Santuario de San Antonio
Wednesday, December 13	2:00 P.M.	-	Tiaong, Kapilya Nuestra Sra. del Rosario, Guiguinto Bulacan

Interment following the necrological services tomorrow, December 13, 3:00 P.M.
at the family Mausoleum, Endless Love Memorial Park, Guiguinto, Bulacan

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ERRATUM
In the obituary of
ATTY. CORNELIO J. SILLANO
published last Dec. 9, 2006,
the name of his wife should have
read **ALICIA** and not Allela
and grandchild Jullan should have
read **JULIAN**.
Our apologies.

More Classifieds
Federis and
Associates Law
Offices
Page A28

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*"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped.
My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song."* — **Psalm 28:7**

PATRIA "PAT" MEDALLA ALVAREZ

*peacefully joined our Creator and her husband Alfredo
on December 9, 2006 at the age of 79.*

Her children **Tez** and **Caloy Coscolluela**, **Alfredo M. Alvarez, Jr.**, **Marivic** and **Tony Gancayco**, **Albert** and **Regina Alvarez**, **Alex M. Alvarez**, **Alvin M. Alvarez**; grandchildren and great grandchildren; brothers and sisters † **Isaias**, † **Maximiano**, † **Pedro**, † **Marina**, † **Napoleon**, **Patricio**, † **Ricardo**, † **Simeon** and **Eustaquio, Jr.**; and other relatives request readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at the Christ the King Parish Church, Greenmeadows, Quezon City.

Funeral Mass will be held on the 14th of December 2006, Thursday, 8:00 a.m. at the Christ the King Parish Church, Greenmeadows, Quezon City. Cremation immediately follows at the Heritage Park Crematorium, Taguig.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

OBITUARY REQUIREMENTS:
❶ Copy of Death Certificate
❷ Any identification document (I.D.)

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Ramon Francisco Rivera y Pereyra

April 26, 1927 – December 10, 2006
Peacefully joined our Creator at the age of 79.
Beloved husband to
Lourdes Rivera y Lontoc;
Father to
Ramon Ignacio (Nacho) Rivera,
Miguel Lorenzo (Lucho) Rivera and Lena Catherina (Candy) Torres, and
Mauricio Jose (Mau) Rivera and Susan Punsalang;
Grandfather to
Alejandro Miguel (Miggy) Rivera
His cremated remains will lie in state at the St. Alphonsus Ligouri Church,
St. Ignatius of Loyola Chapel
At Magallanes, Makati City from December 11-13, 2006.
Mass will be celebrated at 7:00 PM daily. All are invited.
Interment to be announced.
In lieu of flowers, the family requests masses and prayers
for the eternal repose of his soul.

"Liling"

MANUEL SANTOS SON

April 7, 1935 – December 9, 2006
of Marikina City

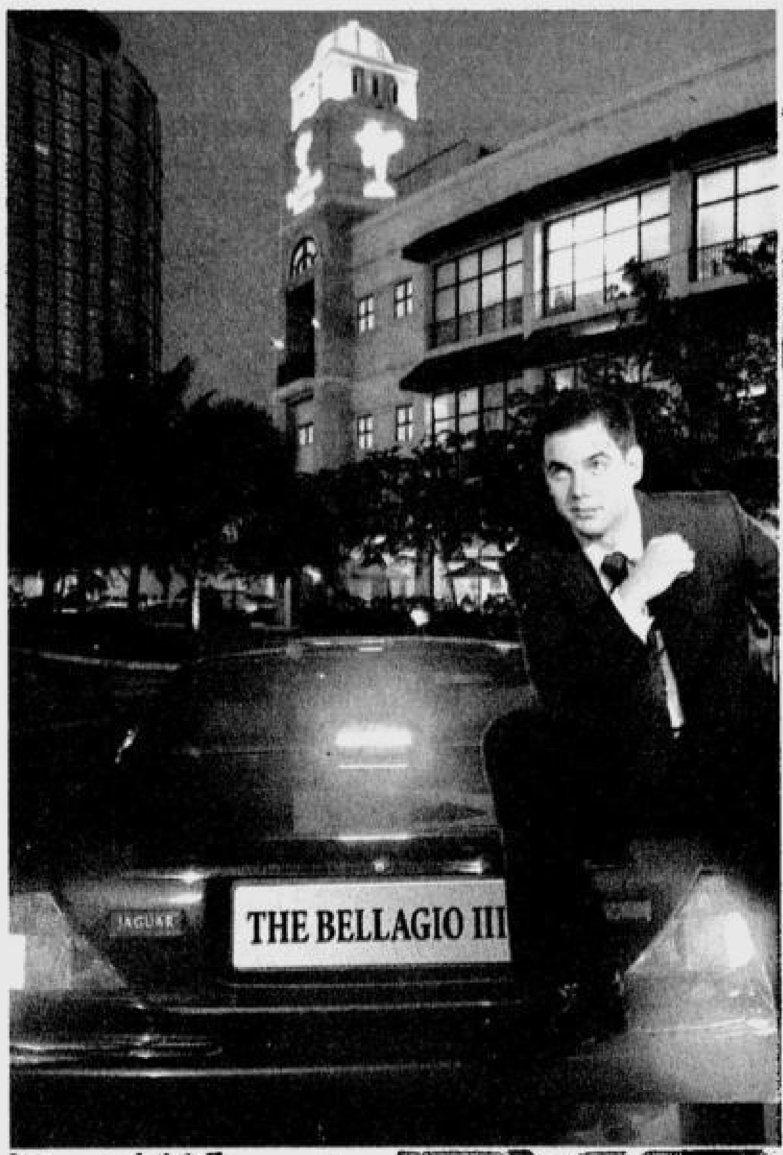
Peacefully joined the Lord at the age of 71.

His wife **VIRGINIA** and children: **VINGLE & Ranie Carlos** and **KRISELDA ANGELIE**; grandchildren: **Paolo, Annika & Gabbi**; brothers, **Nomer, Rodolfo, Benjamin, Jaime & David**; sisters-in-law: **Pinky, Tessie, Diane, Del & Nelia** and relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His cremated remains lie in state at Guzman Funeral Homes at
343 J.P. Rizal St., Sto. Nino, Marikina City.

A Holy Mass will be celebrated on the last day of viewing of ashes
at 10:00am Wednesday, December 13, 2006.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16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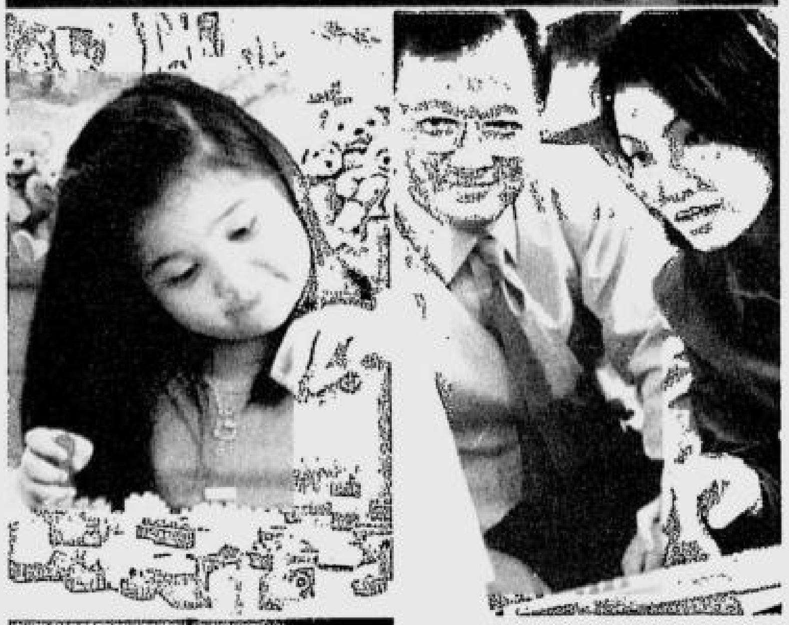
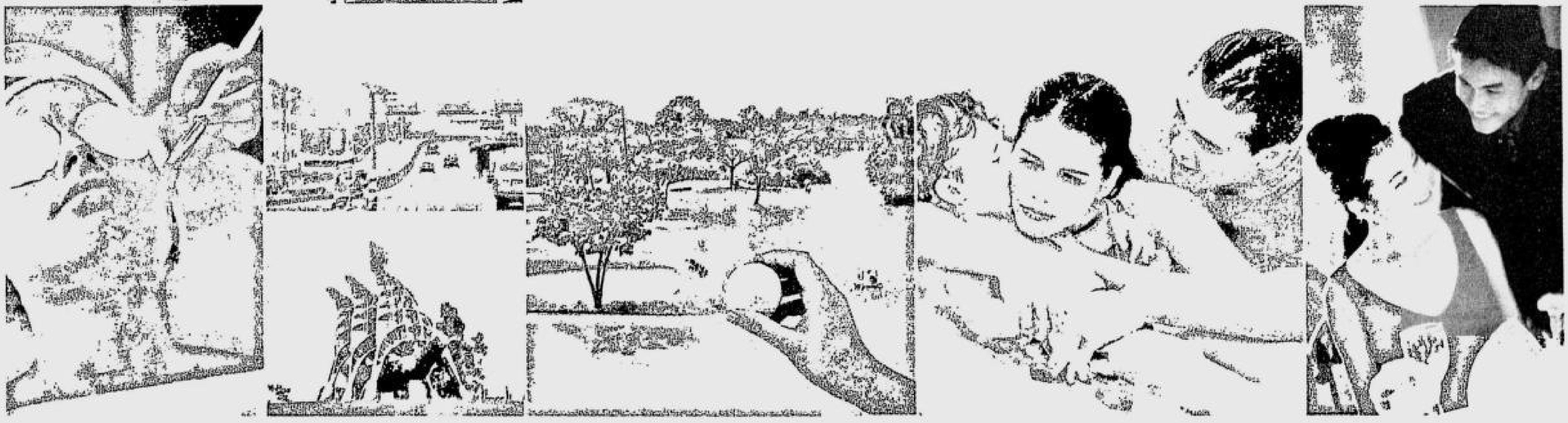
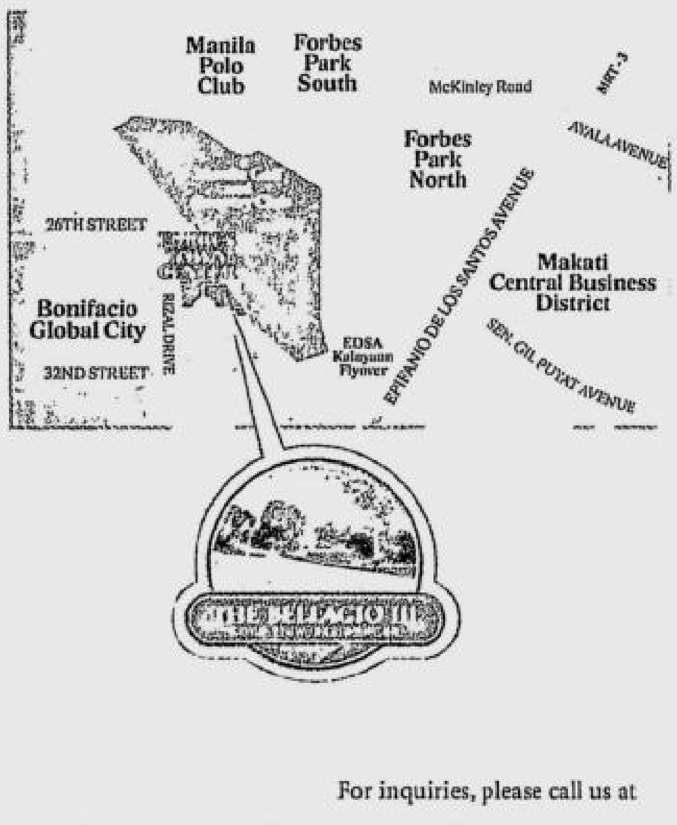
Luxury loft with panoramic golf course views





THE BELLAGIO III

Fronting Manila Golf & Country Club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WELL AND GOOD
Tina Juan

Different kinds of gym bullies

MANY PEOPLE JOIN A GYM FOR the social bonding and camaraderie. However, exercising with other people can have a downside.

While majority of gym-goers are nice and friendly, somewhere along the way you are bound to meet a bully. Due to the aggressive and combative personalities of some people, many gyms have a resident bully or two.

Bullies come in many forms. There are those who only act like ruffians when they are in a group while others operate alone. Some insist on having their own way only when they are in a bad mood.

There are people who have mastered the art of polite bullying and there are those who don't even realize they intimidate others.

Mob rule

Someone once told me she stopped going to her group exercise class because her "matronic" classmates were always talking during class and distracting her from focusing on her workout. They would go in and out of the class anytime they felt like it.

This loud-mouthed group acted like it "owned" the place. One matron even elbowed her because she took the woman's favorite spot in class.

The longer people are members of a gym, the more familiar they get. It's that old "familiarity breeds contempt" thing.

There is usually a ringleader who sets the tone for the bullying. Then, there is a second-in-command and group members.

As intimidating as bully groups are, members are usually meek and mild when separated from the pack. With their friends, they are emboldened to act like obnoxious spoiled brats. Away from them, they lose their brash and bluster.

Lone wolf

It is rare to meet a lone wolf bully. Only very strong, overpowering personalities can intimidate other people by just being themselves. However, if a person is loud enough, arrogant enough or powerful enough, it can happen.

This type of bully will growl to get you off his/her favorite treadmill or snatch away the last exercise mat as you reach for it.

S/he will insist on playing his/her music even if other people don't appreciate his/her choices. S/he will have a bodyguard follow his/her around as s/he works out even if rules say "no bodyguards in the gym."

Moody

These people are Jekyll-and-Hyde bullies. They only do their bullying when they are in a bad mood. Otherwise, they can actually be sweet.

I remember an aerobics classmate like this from years ago. When she was in a bad mood, watch out. She would snarl at everyone or complain loudly about the teacher. But when she was in a good mood, she smiled while exercising and you could hear her humming along to the music.

I was much younger then so I learned to stay far away when she had a sour face and to relax when it looked like she had a good day. If I had been more mature then, I would not have let her moods affect my workout.

'Nice'

To bully someone is to apply pressure in whatever manner to get your own way. Well, these people do it with niceness.

They will "nicely" beg you to reserve a spot in the group exercise room when this is clearly against the rules. They will "nicely" pressure the front desk personnel to let them work out even if they have "forgotten" to pay their dues for two months.

They are probably the type who "nicely" asked high school classmates to let them copy test answers.

Accidental

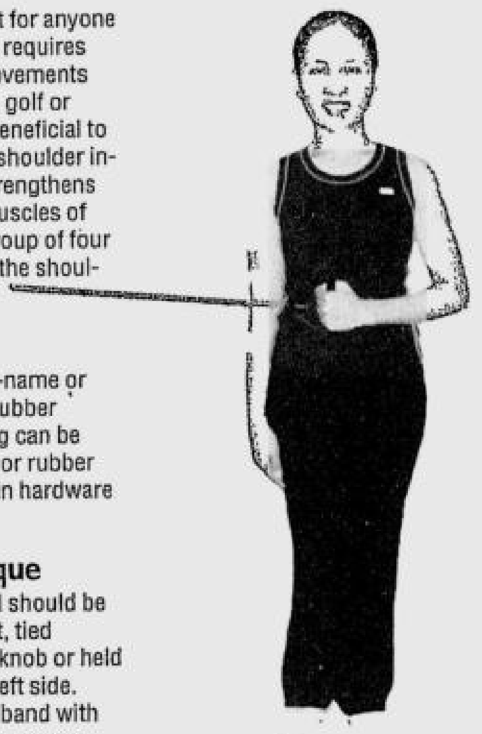
Let's assume you are a well-built man with large muscles and you sit down on the leg extension machine to reflect on your life. Then let's assume that a thin

DIFFERENT/C4

CLIP & SAVE

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

External rotator cuff with rubber band



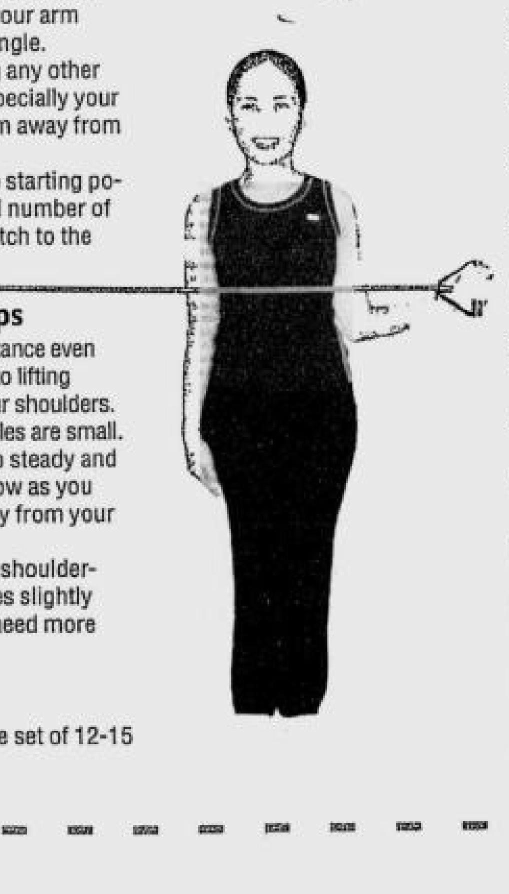
This exercise is a must for anyone who plays a sport that requires repeated overhead movements like tennis, basketball, golf or swimming. It is also beneficial to people who have had shoulder injuries in the past. It strengthens the external rotator muscles of the "rotator cuff," a group of four muscles that encircle the shoulder joint like a cuff.

Equipment

You can use brand-name or homemade exercise rubber bands. Surgical tubing can be bought in drugstores or rubber bands for slingshots in hardware stores.

Exercise technique

1. The rubber band should be hooked around a post, tied around a locked doorknob or held by a partner on your left side.
2. Hold the rubber band with your right hand and your arm bent at a 90-degree angle.
3. Without moving any other part of your body, especially your elbow, move your arm away from your body.
4. Slowly return to starting position. Do the desired number of repetitions. Then switch to the other side.



Performance tips

1. Use a light resistance even though you are used to lifting heavy weights for your shoulders. The rotator cuff muscles are small.
2. Keep your torso steady and don't move your elbow as you bring your hand away from your body.
3. Keep your legs shoulder-width apart and knees slightly bent if you feel you need more stability.

Repetitions

You only need one set of 12-15 repetitions.

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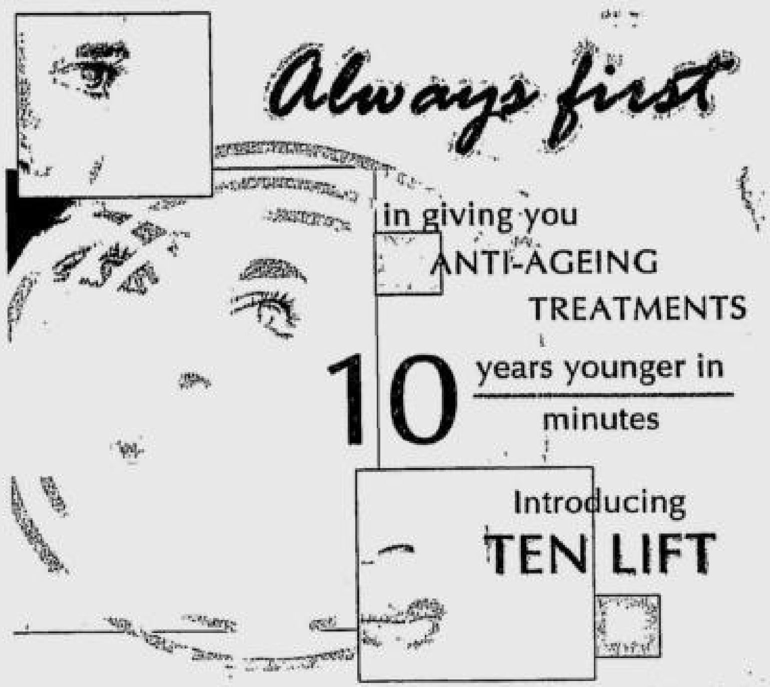

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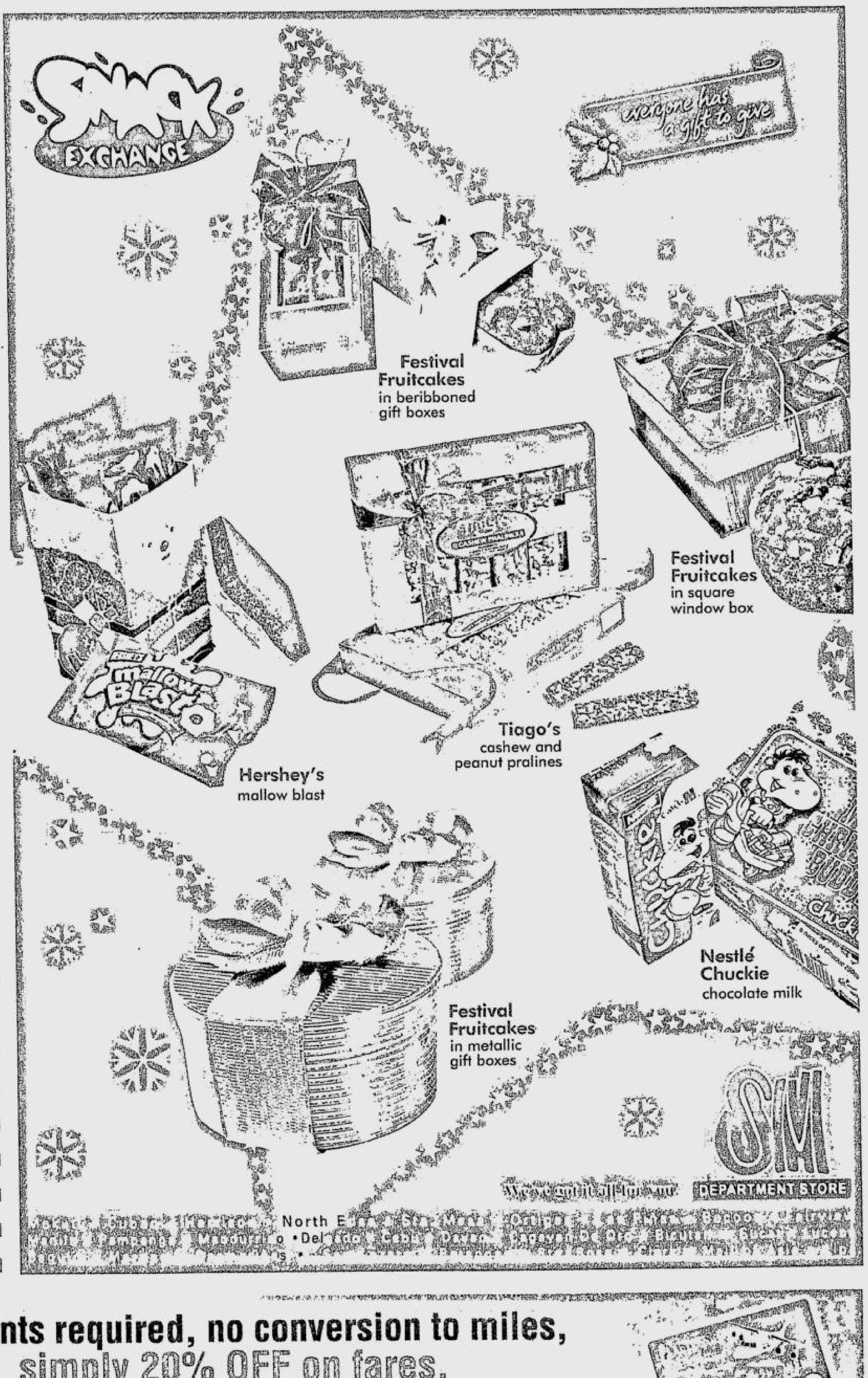

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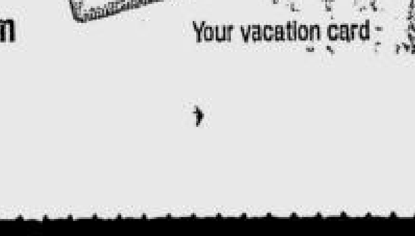
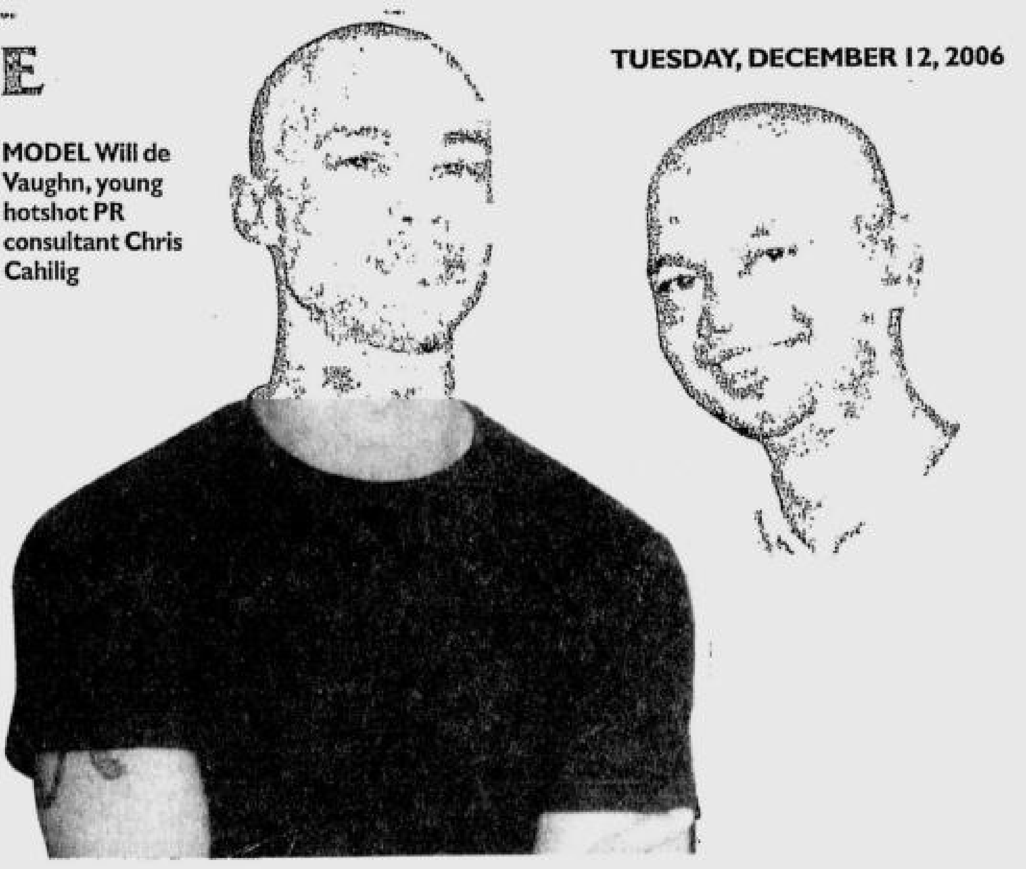

Your vacation card

WRITER Paolo Yanga, photographer Wesley Villarica, Jason Alvarez, and jeans designer Jeff Regodor

MODEL Brent Javier, DJ Mars and Temple Bar and Embassy's Eric Cua


MODEL Will de Vaughn, young hotshot PR consultant Chris Cahilig

FABULOUS Brazilian models

STYLIST Rey Santos, model Charlmagne and Adrian Go

Launching a name that echoes throughout the world

BRAZILIAN-JAPANESE model Fabio Ide and Bb. Pilipinas-Universe Lian Ramos

TREVOR of Fast Pitch and Jay Eigenmann

L'OPERA owner Ermil Napa and wife Fe

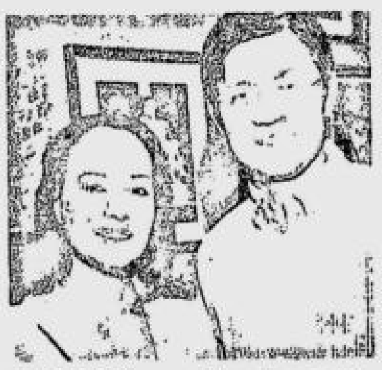
SULTRY Abba Napa, L'Opera's prime asset

OSCAR Ong and Luciano Zanirato

RICO and Ria Lopez

PAOLO Nesi, Imelda Marcos, Lulu Tinio and Dr. Teyet Pascual

JOSÉ Mari Chan and wife Mary Ann Ansaldo


GLORIA Diaz and steady escort Michael de Jesus

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by **Alex Van Hagen** using **Kodak** EasyShare system

UNITED KINGDOM'S TOP DECK innovator, Ministry of Sound DJ **Shortee Blitz**, gave a special one-night-only performance at Embassy for the launch in the Philippines of designer footwear brand Marc Ecko, *palanggas*.

DJ Blitz pulled all the stops and cut loose with his signature beats to a jam-packed dance floor peppered with tons of Manila's most recognizable club-goers.

Winner of the Music of Black Origin (MOBO) Award for Best UK Club DJ, Shortee has played alongside the biggest names in the club music scene, *palanggas*, from **Mariah Carey** to **LL Cool J**. His skills have taken him across the globe, to clubs in Dubai, Hong Kong, Kenya, Australia and now the Philippines.

Wearing Marc Ecko designer sneakers were top ramp and commercial models **William de Vaughn, Brent Javier, Mark Reyes, Adrian Go,** and **Marvin Wyjangco**; actor **Brad Murdoch** and basketball hunk **Iago Raterta.**

"Marc Ecko isn't just about sneakers. It's about a lifestyle and that's what this party is all about," said William de V.

Brent was happy that Marc Ecko was finally here. "That's what I'm talking about… some Eckos for the club and I'm up for anything."

The distinctive rhino trademark of Marc Ecko was seen practically everywhere that night. Select party-goers took home limited-edition Marc Ecko dog tags.

Always ahead of the pack and unafraid to venture into new design territory, the Marc Ecko name continues to top pop-culture brand surveys globally making it one of the most successful lifestyle brands in the world today, dahlings.

Marc Ecko, the man at the helm of one of the most dynamic fashion and lifestyle companies in the world founded *ecko unltd. in 1993, at the age of 20. His marketing savvy has earned the company over $1 billion so far. Marc Ecko leads and others could only follow.

Expect more excitement in the months to come with the introduction of Marc Ecko Cut and Sew and Ecko Red for Woman.

Marc Ecko designer shoes come in a variety of styles and are available at Boboli and Toby's Arena (Glorietta); Toby's (Shangri-La Mall, SM Megamall, North Edsa, Annex and Mall of Asia); Olympic Village World (Alabang Town Center); The Shoe Shop (Rockwell); Rustan's and select SM Department Store branches.

DJ Blitz's sound is all his own. Others may try to sound like him but they all fall short of the mark, dahlings.

L'Opera's 12

It is one of the three top Italian restaurants in Cosmo Manille and definitely my favorite, *palanggas*. So when *moi* got an invite to Manille's L'Opera to celebrate its 12th anniversary at its new, elegant home in The Fort, I dropped everything, *naturellement*.

Welcoming us were solid partners **Paolo Nesi, Conrad Acedillo** and business magnate **Ermil Napa** who hosted an elegant gala dinner for their best patrons.

It was an excellent royal Tuscan feast of five to-die-for courses, superbly done by creative and talented grand chef and partner, *el simpatico* **Moreno Mattei**, no less, dahlings.

Check this out. For starters there were assorted crostini and canape with foie gras and caviar, downed with the sparkling Bellagio white wine.

The grand buffet included a wide selection of antipasti. A perfectly chilled Placido Pinot Grigio complemented the in-house marinated Norwegian salmon gravlax, fresh seafood salad bounty in fresh limoune and vino bianco, excellent de-boned steamed crabmeat with lemon and Tuscan cold-press olive oil on a bed of thinly sliced zucchini and eggplant grilled and marinated with a balsamic reduction.

The fab homemade ravioli of duck in truffle sauce, topped with slices of smoked duck breast was accompanied by a smooth medium-bodied Rosso di Montalcino. For the carnivorous ones, there was a generous serving of melt-in-your-mouth grilled US Angus beef tenderloin stuffed with seared foie gras in truffle sauce and served with spinach a la parmesan and porcini and fresh *champignon*, partnered with the full-bodied red Barbera di Asti. The wine that accompanied each course came from one of L'Opera's loyal wine suppliers, WineDirect, no less.

To cap it all, a cool, totally refreshing dessert of lemon sherbet with slices of fresh mandarin oranges in Grand Marnier sauce was served before everyone moved outside to the breezy patio to watch the wow fireworks marking L'Opera's 12 fantastic years, *palanggas*!

Back inside the resto, we watched as L'Opera's hotshots blew 12 candles on the eye-catching Venetian mask chocolate anniversary cake superbly made by **Marta Matute**, but who else, *n'est ce pas* (as in, *di bala*)?

Check out L'Opera where you'll definitely enjoy the best Tuscan cuisine this side of Tuscany, *palanggas*. It is located at The Fort, Taguig. For reservations, do call 8893963 or 8892784.

Nostalgia

Our town's music lovers were in nostalgic heaven at the swinging, super-fun ultimate reunion concert of "The New Minstrels Five Generations" held at Aliw Theater on Roxas Boulevard, *palanggas*.

The New Minstrels (TNM) was the country's hottest showband in the '70s. It certainly showed it still had that awesome magic touch when it comes to music.

Former TNM members **Joey Albert, Rayan Fuentes, Louie Reyes, Ding Mercado, Eugene Villaluz** led the rest of the ultra-talented performers as they did classics like **Barry Manilow** medley; **Sergio Mendez** medley; and cool, romantic **Burt Bacharach** medley.

The show got the crowd off their seats and dancing on the aisles, dahlings.

With one of the best, **Audie Gemora** as director; **Babes Conde** as musical director, United Multiart Prod. Inc. as producer, how could it not be a smashing success, *palanggas*?

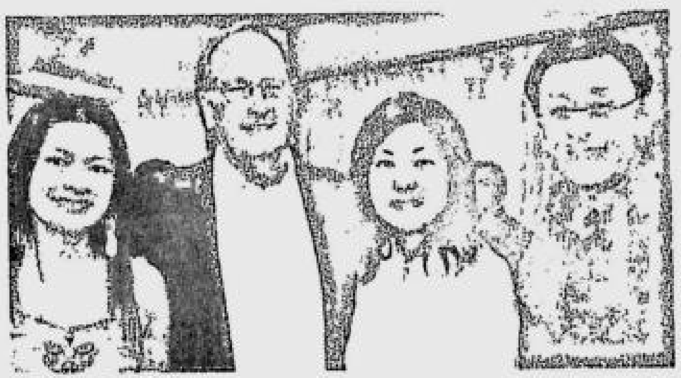
SOCIALITE Mia Ayesa

DJ MARV Luna of Wave 89.1

ACTOR-MODEL Brad Murdoch

ETC host Sam Oh

SINGER Nyoy Volante


MINSTRELS FANS. Carol Ong, Jack Kidwiler, Jessie Tan and top emcee Johnny Litton

BUSINESS partners Sonny Tanchanco and John Gaddi

PUNO CLAN. Ricky Puno, Christy Puno, Jeanette de la Cruz, and TV personality and columnist Dong Puno

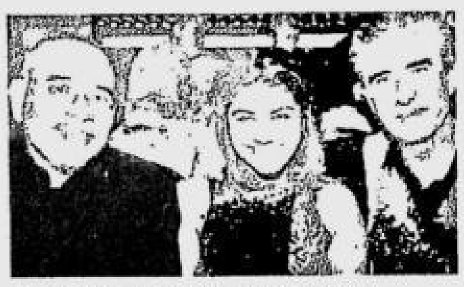
RAMON Pimentel and Basil Ong

DIVINE Guidicelli, Italian Ambassador Rubens Fedele, Dr. Danny and Ising Vasquez

LYN SAMBRANO and Lita Matta

THE NEW Minstrels gives a fabulously memorable performance.

MANNY Reyes of SGV and gorgeous Faith Amigo


LARRY Cruz with Stephanie and Giacomo Nicastro

L'OPERA owner Conrado Acedillo and Gus Macam

Art of living for good health

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

WHEN I JOINED THE recent Art of Living (AOL) seminar, I didn't know what to expect. I knew almost nothing about the course, except that it was started by an Indian guru named Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

The only Ravi Shankar I knew was the internationally known sitar player. When an AOL volunteer named Nameeta Dargani sent me a flyer about the course a year ago, I paid no attention to it. You see, I'm not a guru-tripper and it seemed to be just another Indian meditation or yoga course. It turned out my initial impression was not entirely correct.

What got me into the program in the first place was mainly the insistence of businesswoman Julie Ang, whom I met in Cagayan de Oro during one of my seminars there. She took the AOL course and it changed her life.

She wanted me to take it, too, and even offered to sponsor me. "What have I got to lose?" I told myself. The next problem was finding the time to be free for five evenings and the whole day of the 6th.

Unexpectedly, my schedule cleared up when the AOL seminar was to be held. It was to be conducted by Hong Kong-based AOL teacher Ruth Kuok, whom I never heard of and whose background and qualification I knew nothing about.

Impressive

But I couldn't resist the curiosity because I saw a lot of Ravi Shankar books all over India when I was there last September. I also found out that the AOL seminars were being held in 144 countries all over the world. That was quite impressive.

During the first evening, held at the Shangri-La Hotel in Makati, I saw familiar faces, some former students of mine and old acquaintances. Others were readers of this column. The rest I was meeting for the first time.

Like me, most of them knew nothing about the course or what happened there. They attended because they were persuaded by friends, relatives and graduates of the course. I learned that most of the work of the AOL Foundation was done by volunteers, including the teachers, who were not paid.

Kuok gave very little hint of what would happen during the course. She started right away with the exercises after a very brief introduction. Like lambs being led to the slaughter, we all just followed the instructions on faith.

There were simple yoga stretching exercises and then we were introduced to the breathing techniques which were at the core of an AOL basic training program.

Breathing for health

As a whole, the breathing technique is called Kriya. It consists of some very simple breathing protocol or rhythm meant to improve health in all levels: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

We were not told of these effects until later in the course. We were asked just to observe the results, experience them for ourselves before we were given the rationale or explanation for them.

This was frustrating at first, but I played along and quietly obeyed instructions without protest or questions.

One thing more, we were asked to refrain from eating meat, smoking or drinking alcohol for six days. One lady participant was relieved that the prohibition did not include sex.

The effect of the first day lessons was very good. I felt completely relaxed and at peace; my blood pressure, usually elevated, dropped even before I took my regular medication. My head cleared up.

So I attended the next day, and the next, completing the sixth day to my great surprise and astonishment. I rarely could finish a course that long. But I made it!

What made me and the rest of the 40 participants (who were divided into morning and evening classes) stay the course? The testimonials on the sixth day said it all: Everybody found the program beneficial one way or another.

Two women said their insomnia was cured and they could now sleep without need for a pill. Others said they became less irritable and more at peace with themselves. A businesswoman said she became more tolerant of her employees' mistakes, and so on.

The effects the participants reported are borne out by the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi. The regular practice of the breathing exercises called Sudarshan Kriya and Pranayama, according to scientists, lowered the bad and increased the good cholesterol level; decreased blood cortisol and blood lactate levels (both associated with anxiety and stress); increased beta brain wave activity on the left frontal, occipital and midline regimen of the brain indicative of heightened awareness.

They also found that people suffering from depression and other negative emotional and mental states were greatly relieved through regular practice of these techniques.

I find that the AOL Seminar complements, and does not contradict, the Inner Mind development seminars that I teach.

Visit www.artofliving.org.ph. For info on Inner Mind Development seminars, call 8107245 or 8926806.

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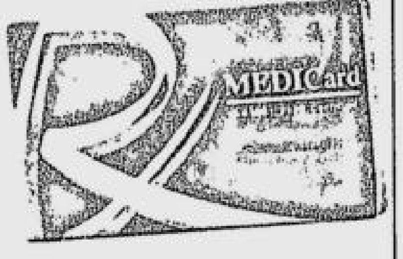
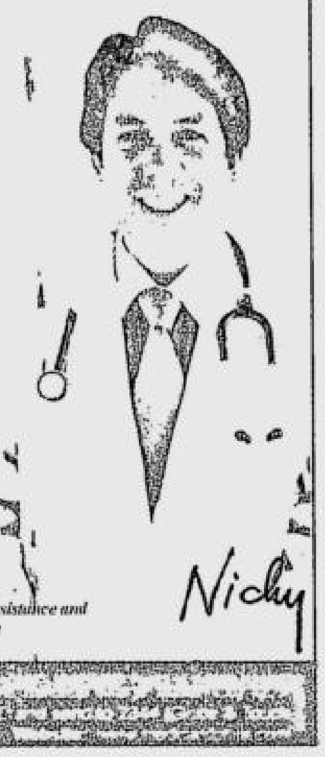
Are there exercises to prevent Asthma?

Patients with Asthma may benefit from exercises. It decreases bronchospasm, minimizes attacks of shortness of breath, gain control of breathing, mobilizes and removes secretions after attacks of shortness of breath, corrects posture to decrease "rounded shoulders" and "forward head" positions, and gradually increases exercise tolerance and endurance. Its Plan of care includes 1. *Diaphragmatic Breathing Exercises:* Patients breathe in slowly and deeply with shoulders relaxed, upper chest quiet and abdomen rising followed by slowly letting the air out. 2. *Pursed Lip Breathing:* Breathe in slowly and deeply followed by relaxed expiration with loose-pursed lips. 3. *Controlled Breathing:* Patient breathes in diaphragmatically (slow and deep) followed by pursed lip expiration (not forceful expiration) 4. *Controlled Coughing:* Take a deep and relaxed inspiration followed by double cough (second cough during single expiration is more productive), Never allow sucking in of air by gasping. 5. *Postural Drainage:* This is done after and not during the asthma attack. 6. *Postural Training:* muscle relaxation techniques, range of motion and stretching exercises. 7. Encourage mild to moderate activities for short periods of time followed by rest, Avoid prolonged, vigorous physical activities and use controlled breathing during exertion.

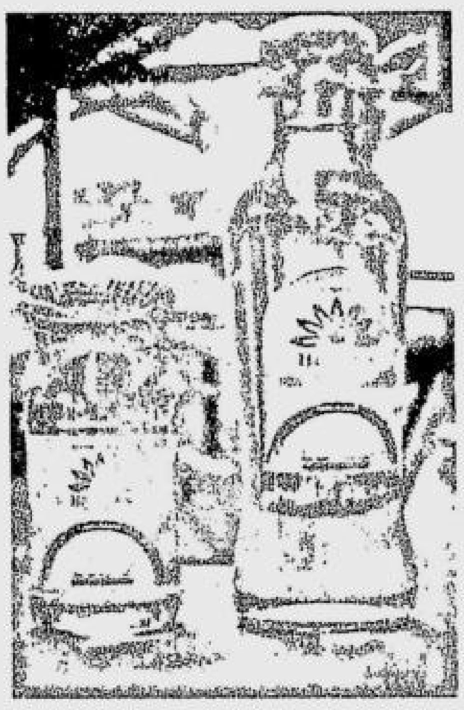
This week's answer to our feature question is courtesy of our eight-year medical service provider Dr. Victoria Fresita M. Morales. Dra. Morales specializes in Rehabilitation Medicine. She earned her medical degree from the University of Sto. Tomas. followed by her residency training for a specialization in Rehabilitation Medicine in 1997 from Veteran's Memorial Medical Center She is a fellow of the Philippine Academy of Rehabilitation Medicine and a diplomate of the Philippine Board of Rehabilitation Medicine. She spends her free time with her husband Dr. Eric and their three children Mica, Franco and Paolo. MEDICard members may seek for her advice at the World Citi Medical Center every Monday, Wednesday, 1pm to 3pm and Fridays, 9am to 11am or at the Borough Medical Care Institute every Tuesday and Thursday





MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. Write to Dr. Nicky or E-mail him at inquirya medicardphils.com for your inquiries on health matters.

Nicky



COCONUT AND HONEY

Heaven's Cure offers more than 30 coconut and honey-enriched food and non-food products. Both coconut and honey have been found in some studies to be useful supplements. In promoting the products, Heaven's Cure also hopes to help raise the standard of living of coconut farmers. Visit www.marinduqueland.com and www.heavenscure.net. Call 7443184 or text 0919-5114734.

Thick & Easy keeps the balance in food for stroke and other patients

For patients whose swallowing reflex has been impaired by a stroke or by other disorders such as Parkinson's disease cerebral palsy, alzheimers and patient from tube feeding, nutrition is often compromised by the limited number of foods they can manage to eat.

Today, Fresenius Kabi, the leader in clinical nutrition in Europe, is giving away three sample packets of Thick & Easy, a newly introduced product in the Philippines that helps patients with swallowing disorders. All you need to do is call hotline 8896492 loc.123 to request your samples and see for yourself how this starch-based thickener allows patients to better control and ingest their food and drinks.

By turning food into a cohesive consistency, Thick & Easy avoids the unappetizing mass and inconsistent texture that come with simply liquefying food in a blender. ***Thick & Easy helps prevent food from accidentally going to the lungs instead of the stomach***. This occurs because of the weakness or lack of coordination in the mouth and throat muscles.

For years, caregivers used proxy thickeners like gelatin to thicken the consistency of food and drinks. However, it was difficult to control how much or how little was needed for different varieties of food. Honey or gelatin also affected the taste and appearance of meals.

thick and easy thick and easy thick and easy

Unlike proxy thickeners, Thick & Easy has no taste and can be mixed to achieve a wide range of consistencies—from syrup to pudding-like. It can also be used as a soaking solution for biscuits and breads.

Thick & Easy allows patients to take in a variety of "tough to swallow" drinks including juice, carbonated drinks, tea, coffee, and even alcoholic drinks! The required amount of Thick & Easy is added to the drink and then whisked. After letting the mixture stand for a minute, the patient can then enjoy his refreshment.

A soaking solution can also be made by mixing a tablespoonful of Thick & Easy into 125ml of fruit juice, gravy, water or soup stock. Biscuits or bread can be dipped into the solution and then placed on a plate. After refrigerating for two hours, the biscuits can then be served.

Thick & Easy can also be used on hot or cold pureed vegetables or meat. Two tablespoons of Thick & Easy are added to the vegetables to obtain a creamed potato consistency. For blended and finely chopped meats with gravy or stock, Thick & Easy turns them into a smooth paste that can be reheated in a microwave and used as a sandwich filling.

It would be difficult if not impossible to replicate the versatility of Thick & Easy with hard-to-control thickeners like gelatin. In addition, Thick & Easy blends quickly and smoothly and can be frozen and reheated. Food can be prepared in bulk and can be used in standardized menus. In addition, Thick & Easy has a shelf life of three years. Thus, Thick & Easy saves time and money.

More important, Thick & Easy releases 98 % of the available fluids in food—which helps prevent dehydration among patients.

Indeed, as the U.K.-based non-profit Stroke Association makes clear, "Plenty of sleep, a good diet and regular physical exercise are all important to rehabilitation." Thick & Easy answers a third of the equation by giving patients the ability to eat a balanced array of foods they can also enjoy.

Find out more about how Thick & Easy can help you, your patient or your loved ones trek the road to recovery and rehabilitation – appetizingly and in full nutrition. Just call hotline 8896492 loc.123 to receive your three sample packs of Thick & Easy.

Thick & Easy is available at selected Mercury Drugstores.

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INSIDE OUT
Cory Quirino

Should you starve yourself this Christmas?

ILLUSTRATION: LA MISTADES

WITH THE YULETIDE SPIRIT INSPIRING us to celebrate, the thought of feasting can be either exciting or depressing.

Inevitably, food in all manner of culinary expression is within easy reach. And the distance table delights have to travel from plate to mouth is so short. All it takes is one generous or excessive helping for you to pay the holiday bingeing price—weight gain.

More than excess poundage, the other natural consequence of indulgence is extra inches.

License to party

Allowing yourself to celebrate is perfectly all right but bingeing is another story.

Here are some familiar excuses for overindulgence:

- Life is too short. Celebrate it now.
- I deserve to spoil myself once in a while.
- I don't want to have regrets tomorrow morning about the food I denied myself or did not finish today.
- It's okay to overeat. Tomorrow I diet.
- I might offend the host of the party if I don't eat.
- Self-denial is for oldies, and I'm still young!
- Diets are meant to be forgotten during the holidays.
- Just one more serving will not hurt me.
- I have to belong and join in the merrymaking.
- Santa will be pleased.

Does any of this ring a bell? You can come up with every imaginable rationalization but the end result is the same. Upon waking up the next morning you just may have regrets.

And, more often than not, regrets are accompanied by hangover, migraine, indigestion, diarrhea or constipation. Take your pick.

Panic not

There's no need to panic. You can still be a little more liberal with yourself and your food choices without suffering any remorse the morning after. Here's how.

Calorie rationing

Plan ahead. The wellness lifestyle is precisely all about the way you live.

So, if all this time you have been careful not to overdo fats, oils and sweets, you should hold the treats even more before a party so that on D-day, you can take more.

Example: Eat less of your cravings Monday-Thursday, so that come Friday you can allow yourself more generous (not excessive) portions.

Vitamin fortress

Build a vitamin fortress around you. The A, C, E, S(elenium) can help neutralize disease-causing free radicals in overrich holiday banquets. If you plan to drink and be merry, take additional Vitamin C and B because alcohol depletes the body of these.

Fiber up

Up your intake of fiber before meals. Salads/vegetables are good starters. Even if you are tempted to follow them up with roast pork and beef and sweet, creamy desserts, it should be no problem.

Your salad is in place filled with goodness and ready to absorb some, if not all, of the grease in the courses that may follow. Or drink a cup of fiber-mixed water.

Waist-watching

Be watchful and sensitive to your feeling of fullness. As soon as you feel the pressure of stuffing yourself, stop before there isn't any room left.

Giveaways

Traditionally, party hosts set aside food for guests to take home. Accept when it is offered. You may even ask for more so you can give it to street kids on the way home or donate to your favorite shelter. Bring a little yuletide cheer to the needy. To you, this is certainly food for the soul.

Sweet attack

Should your palate look for something sweet, or your dessert cravings threaten to overwhelm you, you can resist the temptation with a full meal. Follow with a cup of hot *ampalaya* tea to neutralize further the sugar attack.

Sweat secret

The more you sweat, the sooner your body burns the calorie overload during the holidays. So, do something to make you perspire—dance, walk, run, swim, etc.

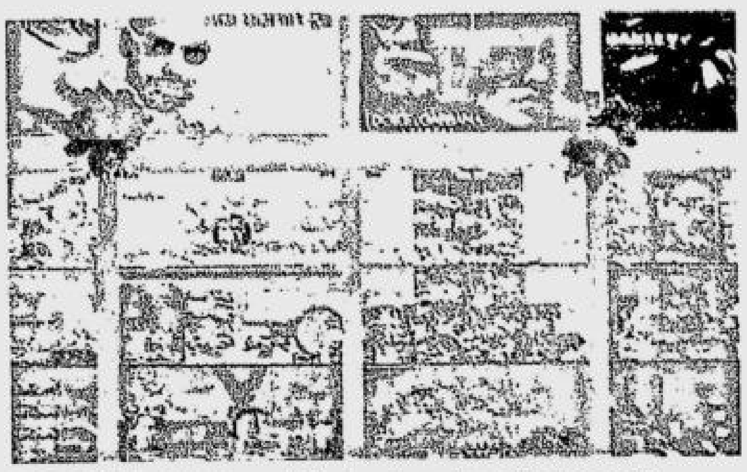
If you follow these guidelines, you can feast without guilt this season.

Your affirmation

"I feast on the good, not the bad."

Love and light!

More comfortable lenses



SARABIA Optical store at Rockwell carries a wide range of eyeglass frames and lenses.

SARABIA OPTICAL-ROCKWELL brings to Manila an innovative Ciba Vision product, Focus Dailies Aqua Release contact lenses.

The lenses have a built-in moisturizing agent that is gradually released throughout the day to provide longer-lasting comfort. This makes it possible to wear the lenses longer more comfortably.

Based in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, Ciba Vision is a global leader in research, development and manufacturing of optical and ophthalmic products and services, including contact lenses and lens care products. Ciba Vision products are available in more than 70 countries.

Visit the Ciba Vision website at www.cibavision.com.

Ciba Vision is the eye care unit of Novartis.

DAILIES
All Day Comfort
DAILIES
All Day Comfort

Eat well for a healthy holiday season

HEALTHY Options news digest celebrates the holidays with a special issue on "Eating Well."

HEALTHY OPTIONS GETS you ready for the holidays with its special "Eating Well" issue.

"Cooking with Wine—A Splash of Flavor" offers advice on how you can put some "spirit" in your salads, sides dishes, entrees and desserts.

To help you make healthy choices, read "The Art of Cooking with Healthy Oils." Get major eating tips with "Holiday Party: Don't Pig Out."

Learn more from "Frozen Foods: Shopping Tips" and "Food Allergies: When Food Becomes the Enemy."

Find out about "Gluten-Intolerance," a condition in which there is a chronic reaction to certain protein chains, referred to as glutens, found in some cereal grains.

Meanwhile, Healthy Options announces that it will feature two Filipino artists, Lizanne Uychaco and Edgar Doctor, in its Christmas boxes and Healthy Options 2007 Desk Calendar.

The Healthy Options lifestyle news digest is free to regular customers of its stores at 1/L, Shangri-La Plaza Mall, Mandaluyong City; Rustan's Supermarket, Makati City; 2/L, Festival Supermall, Filinvest, Alabang; G/L, Ayala Center, Cebu City; lower G/F, SM City, North Edsa; 2/L, SM City Manila; Greenbelt, Ayala Center, Makati City; 2/L, SM Megamall B, Edsa, Mandaluyong City; SM Pampanga, SM Sta. Rosa, SM Mall of Asia and SM Clark.

Visit www.healthyoptions.com.ph.

Australian wellness products

AT THE CONTRACT-SIGNING at the Australian Embassy were MC Spa Essential president Dr. Mike Turvill, Ambassador Tony Hely and ABP general manager Tim Smith.

AUSTRALIAN Botanical Products (ABP), Australia's leading supplier of natural essential oils, has tied up with MC Spa Essentials to bring to the Philippines its beauty and wellness products.

Aside from natural essential oils, ABP also has fragrance and vegetable oils, buffers, cosmetic ingredients and floral waters.

MC Spa Essentials is currently one of the leading suppliers of top spas in the Philippines. It will be the exclusive distributor of ABP products. The ABP oils are currently used by Terra Spa at the Discovery Suites. They are also now available in Watson's Personal Care Stores.

Gov't doctors hold annual convention

THE PHILIPPINE ASSOCIATION OF GOVernment Physicians Inc. (Pagpi) held recently its 2nd Annual National Convention at the Manila Hotel.

Theme of this year's conference was "Braving the Challenges of Current Realities in Government Medical Practice."

The convention tackled the steady loss of medical workers due to out-migration.

Special guests included Rep. Ferjenel G. Biron, keynote speaker; Health Undersecretary Jade del Mundo; Dr. Rodel Nodora, representing Dr. Kenneth Ronquillo of the Department of Health (DOH); lawyer Reynaldo Capangpangan of Philhealth Region 8; Mayor Raul Banias of Concepcion, Iloilo; Dr. Anthony Rolando T. Golez Jr. of the Office of Civil Defense-Department of National Defense; Commissioner Cesar Buenaflor of the Civil Service Commission; Dr. Federico M. Macaranas of Asian Institute of Management (AIM); and Roberto Pagdanganan of the Philippine International Trading Corporation.

Dr. Lydia S. Depra-Ramos, regional director of the DOH-Center for Health Development Western Visayas, is Pagpi founding president.

Different kinds of gym bullies

From page C1

young guy who is new to the gym wants to use that very machine.

What do you think are the chances that he will ask you to move? Nil to nothing.

The poor guy will probably just wait until you are good and ready to get off your bottom. You didn't mean to intimidate him but you did.

Let's look at another example. An advanced exerciser insists on joining a beginner's class of less fit participants because s/he likes the time slot. This person does all kinds of fancy moves that are totally different from the rest of the class. Not only that, s/he insists on staying in front. S/he is an accidental bully because s/he is disruptive and distracting.

If you and your exercise *barkada* are always laughing and talking loudly, you are unintentionally bullying other people. I know some who transferred to other time slots or even other gyms just to escape the loud cackles of certain groups (usually women).

Fight back

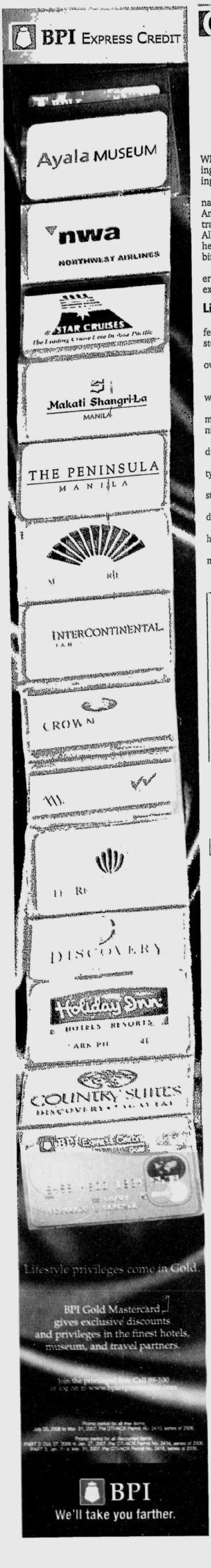
The fastest way to settle things is to complain to the gym staff. But this only works if they are courageous enough to do something about it. They could be more scared of the bully than you are.

The second way is to approach the bully and explain how his/her behavior is upsetting you. This is only for the brave-of-heart because you never know how the other party will react. However, those who are fearless enough usually discover that bullies back off when confronted.

The third is to exercise with your own group. The "balance of power" will be corrected and an unspoken mutual respect agreement is usually reached.

Note: The Art of Living will teach breathing exercises to relieve stress Jan. 15-20. Fee is P3,000. E-mail info@artofliving.org.ph or text AOL <your name> <message> to 2920 (Globe and Smart only).

Visit www.tinajuanfitness.info.



ENTERTAI

Editor Emmie G. Velard

sms feedback: inquirer ent name/age/city/message to 2207 (Globe) and 283 (Smart

ent@inquirer.c

Sunshine says she's not bothered by Buboy & Gwen's steamy scenes

DOLLY WOOD

Dolly Anne Carvajal

CM FILMS' ENTRY TO THE METRO MANILA Film Festival, "Ligalig," is a thriller like no other.

Cesar Montano plays the lead role as Junior. In the end you will find out who he really is.

His wife **Sunshine**, who is also in the film, is not bothered by Buboy's steamy love scene with **Gwen Garci**. "I didn't watch their shoot so they wouldn't feel awkward," she told me. "Later, I checked the stills in Buboy's digicam. I was shocked—they were both naked ... and kissing all over! If I were pregnant, I'd have gotten really jealous. *Pero ayoko nang ma*-issue as the super jealous wife, like when Buboy got linked to Juliana Palermo. Peace *na kami ni* July!"

'Mano Po 5'

THE LOVE team of **Richard Gutierrez** and **Angel Locsin** is back in Regal Entertainment's "Mano Po 5: Gua Ay Di," a romantic comedy about multicultural romance. During the press con, direk **Joel Lamangan** and the cast kept teasing me to join them at the presidential table since I have a cameo role.

I asked Angel, Richard and **Christian Bautista** what they would do if they fell for someone they were not allowed to love, just like the story of their movie. Christian said, "I will exhaust all options before I let her go." Richard agreed "I will fight till the end." Angel seconded, "Love is worth fighting for."

Speaking of love, Angel is relieved that her mom has split up with a younger boyfriend. And how are things between her and **Oyo**? "We hope to go to Bantayan Island Cebu for Christmas," she said.

F.Y.I. (For Your Indulgence)

- Supermodel and super single **Mom Patty Betita** is happy for her ex, **JV Ejercito**, who's getting hitched to Cindy Lotuaco in February.

"We have a great relationship as parents to our son **Emilio**," she said. "I'm happy with my American boyfriend, Jimmy. We've been together for seven months. He gets along well with Emilio."

- **Roxanne Guinoo**, waiting for the taping of "Sis" to start, told someone, "*Ang ganda ni* Rustom *sa* 'Zza Zsa Zaturnnah'! *Sayang, guwapo pa naman bago siya nag*-out." Then they realized that **Carmina Villaroel** was just within earshot. Did she hear that?
- Could it be true that the comedy division of GMA 7 took pay cuts due to too an influx of talents? No more laughing all the way to the bank?
- I caught **Jeremy Marquez**'s moving perfor-

SUNSHINE/ D3

CHRISTIAN Bautista, Angel Locsin and Richard Gutierrez in "Gua Ay Di."

CHEER FACTOR

Something about Mary

LOS ANGELES—Grammy-winning pop singer Mariah Carey is trying to block porn star-turned politician Mary Carey from trademarking her similar-sounding stage name, saying fans could get the two confused.

But the adult film actress, whose real name is Mary Cook, said on Friday that she would not be intimidated by the international superstar and will press forward with her trademark application.

Kind of funny

"I'm ready to battle Mariah over this because I've been Mary Carey for a long time," Mary Carey told Reuters. "It's kind of funny because I'm a porn star and I've been being myself for a long time. I think she's being silly."

She started using the stage name Mary Carey in 2002 and ran for California governor against Arnold Schwarzenegger. She filed the trademark papers earlier this year. *Reuters*

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INANG YAYA 1:00 3:10 / 5:20 / 7:30 / 9:40
PINK FESTIVAL 6:00 P.M.-10:30 P.M.
HAPPY FEET 12:10 / 2:30 / 4:50 / 7:10 / 9:30
KAMASUTRA 3 12:50 / 3:05 / 5:20 / 7:35 / 9:50
CASINO ROYALE 1:20 / 4:10 / 7:00 / 9:50
REYNA 12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30
ALL THE KING'S MEN 1:00 / 3:40 / 6:20 / 9:00

ALIMALL 5

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REYNA 11:45 / 1:55 / 4:05 / 6:15 / 8:25
CASINO ROYALE 12:00 / 2:50 / 5:40 / 8:30
KAMASUTRA 3 12:05 / 3:40 / 3:55 / 6:10 / 8:25
THE NATIVITY 1:05 / 3:30 / 5:55 / 8:20

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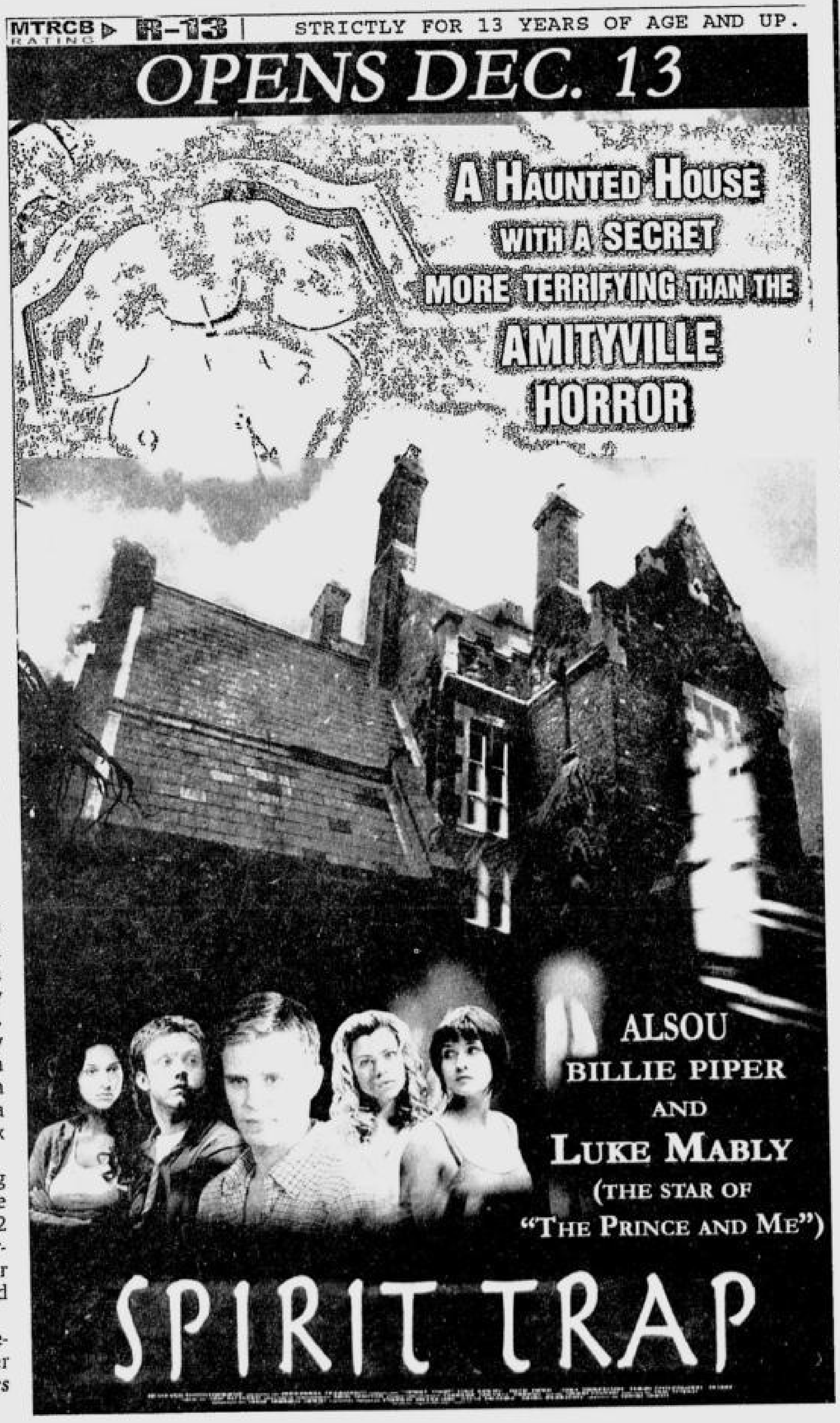

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AND
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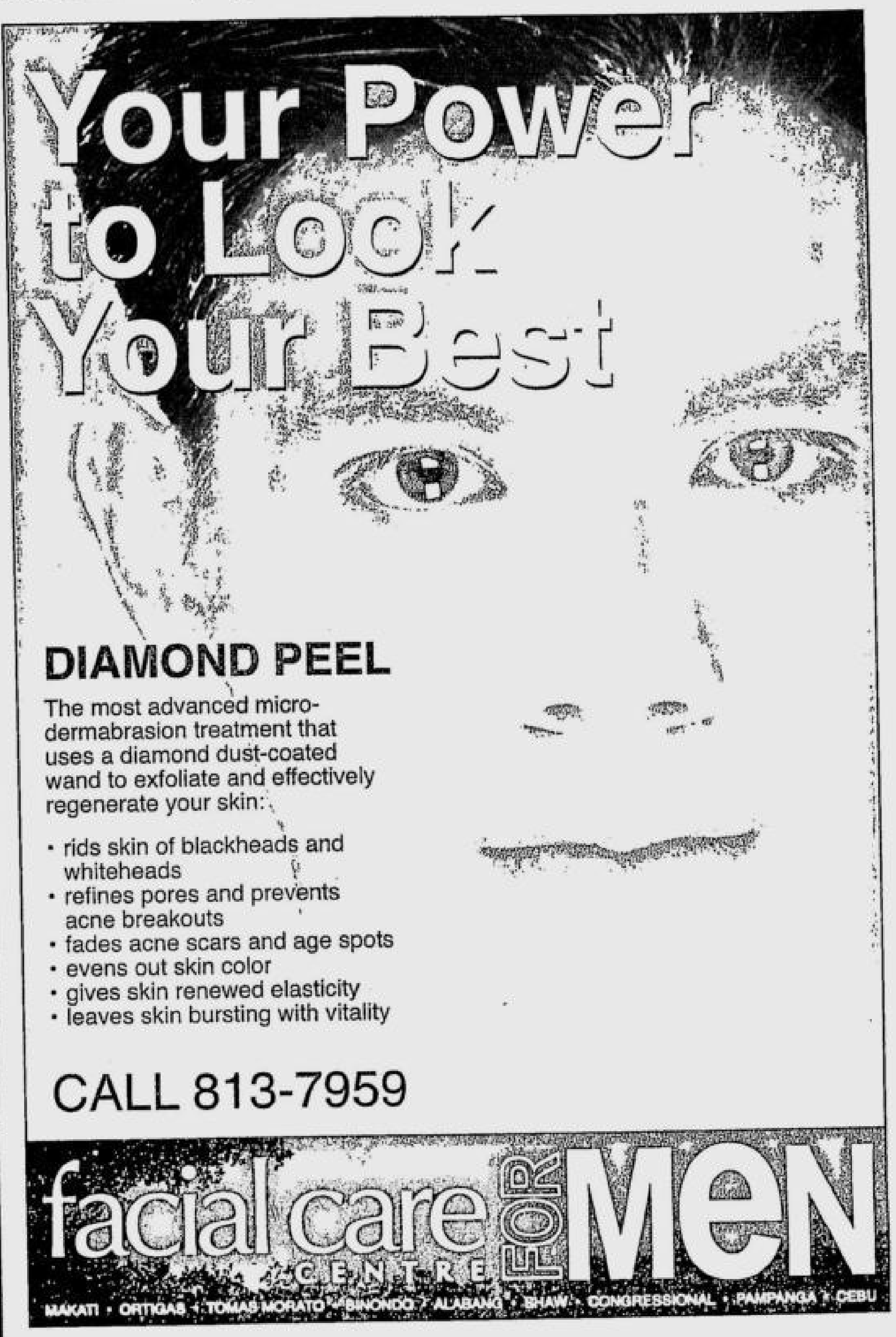
SPIRIT TRAP



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CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

"THE ROAD IS TWISTED AND SO ARE THE LAUGHS. THIS ONE IS A WINNER."
RollingStone

"A HILARIOUS TALE ABOUT WINNING, LOSING AND THAT NETHER STATE IN BETWEEN WHERE MOST OF US MUST LEARN TO LIVE."
AP Associated Press

"A MAGICAL EXPERIENCE."
San Francisco Chronicle

OFFICIAL SELECTION SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

GREG KINNEAR   STEVE CARELL   TONI COLLETTE   PAUL DANO   WITH ABIGAIL BRESLIN   AND ALAN ARKIN

LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE
A FAMILY ON THE VERGE OF A BREAKDOWN

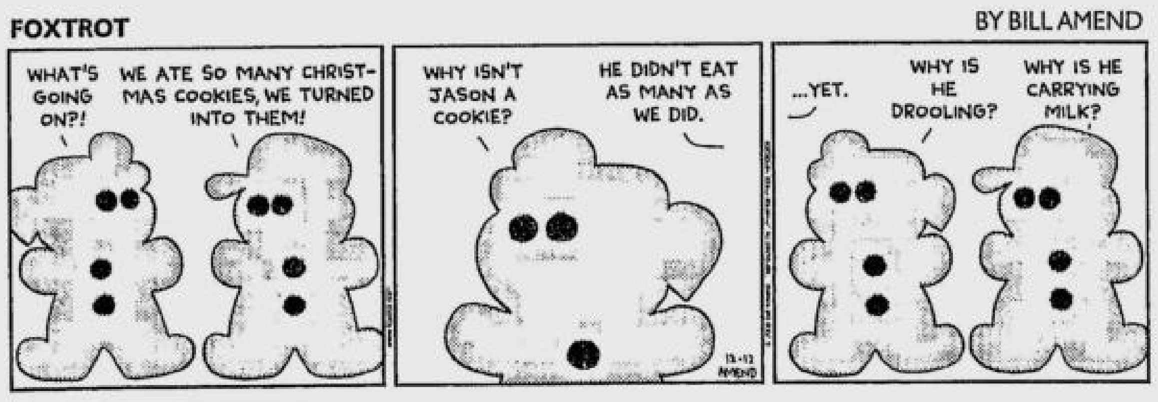
www.foxsearchlight.com

MTRCB Rating: Restricted 13

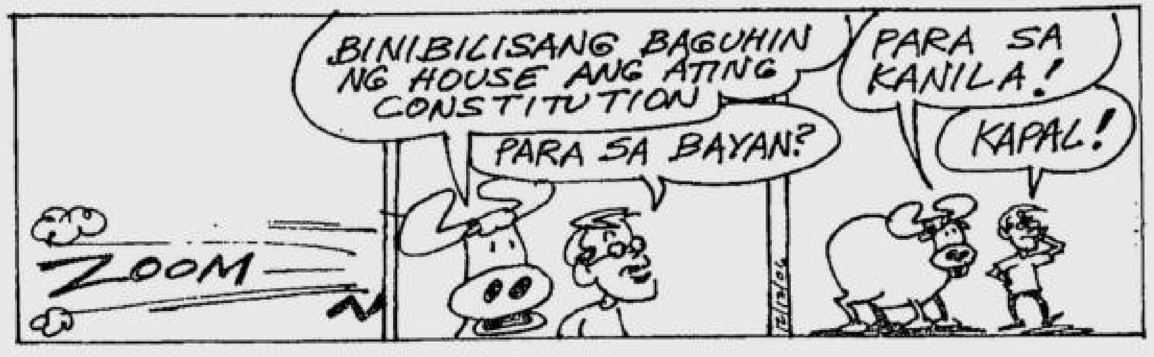
20th Century Fox

glorietta

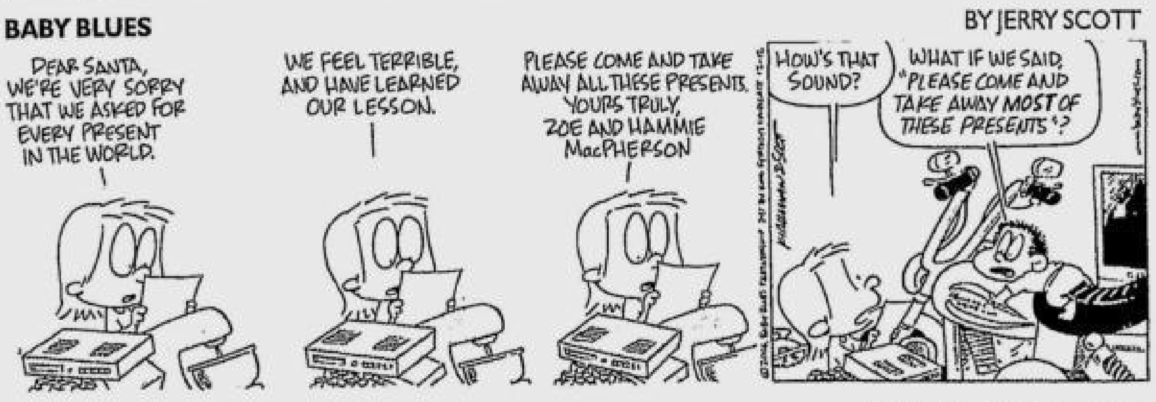
FOXTROT
BY BILL AMEND


WHAT'S GOING ON?!
WE ATE SO MANY CHRISTMAS COOKIES, WE TURNED INTO THEM!
WHY ISN'T JASON A COOKIE?
HE DIDN'T EAT AS MANY AS WE DID.
...YET.
WHY IS HE DROOLING?
WHY IS HE CARRYING MILK?
12-12 AMEND

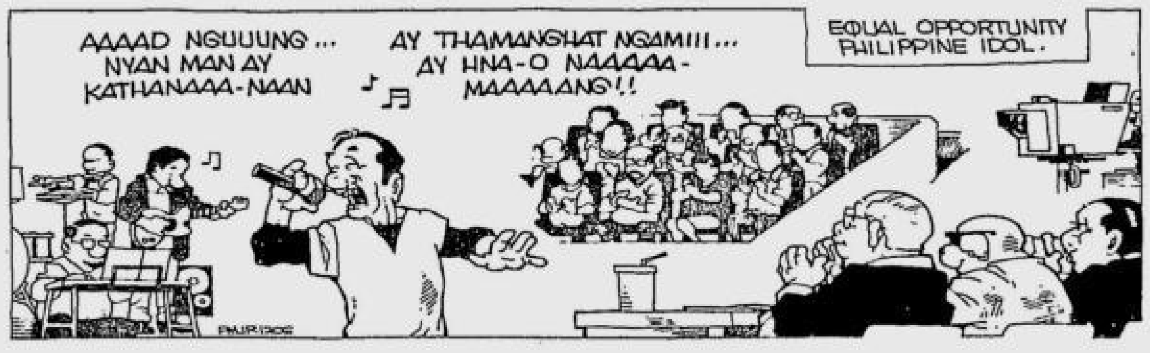
A. LIPIN
BY JESS ABRERA


BINIBILISANG BAGUHIN NG HOUSE ANG ATING CONSTITUTION
PARA SA BAYAN?
ZOOM
PARA SA KANILA!
KAPAL!

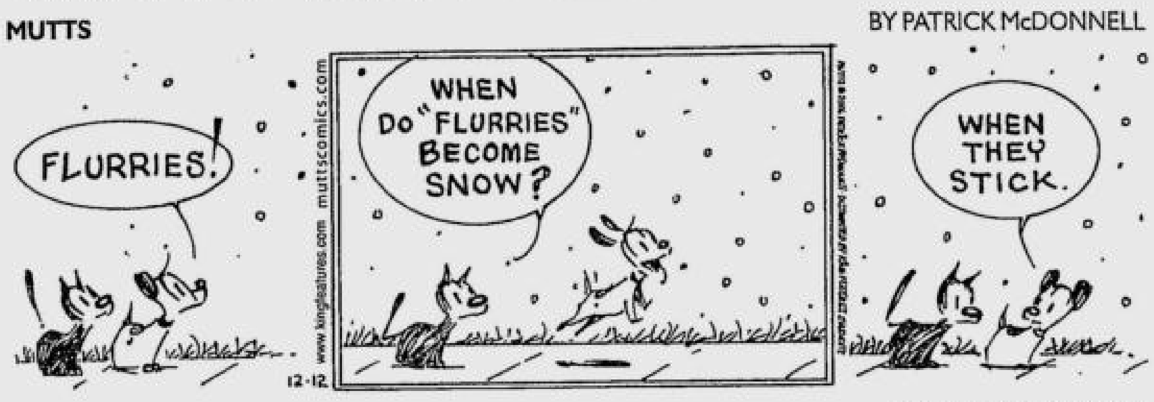
BABY BLUES
BY JERRY SCOTT


DEAR SANTA, WE'RE VERY SORRY THAT WE ASKED FOR EVERY PRESENT IN THE WORLD.
WE FEEL TERRIBLE, AND HAVE LEARNED OUR LESSON.
PLEASE COME AND TAKE AWAY ALL THESE PRESENTS. YOURS TRULY, ZOE AND HAMMIE MacPHERSON
HOW'S THAT SOUND?
WHAT IF WE SAID, "PLEASE COME AND TAKE AWAY MOST OF THESE PRESENTS"?

PUGAD BABOY
BY P.M. JUNIOR


AAAAD NGUUUNG... NYAN MAN AY KATHANAAA-NAAN
AY THAMANGHAT NGAMIII... AY HNA-O NAAAAA-MAAAAANG!!
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PHILIPPINE IDOL.
PMJR1206

MUTTS
BY PATRICK McDONNELL


FLURRIES!
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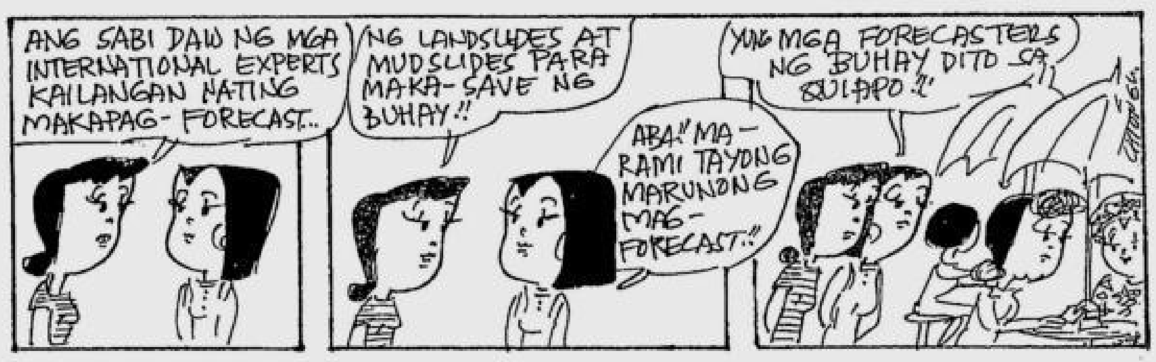
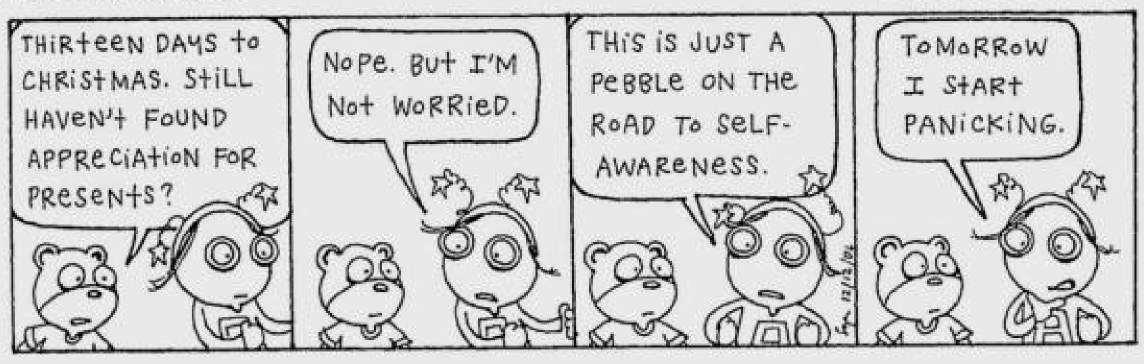
muttscomics.com
12-12
WHEN DO "FLURRIES" BECOME SNOW?
WHEN THEY STICK.

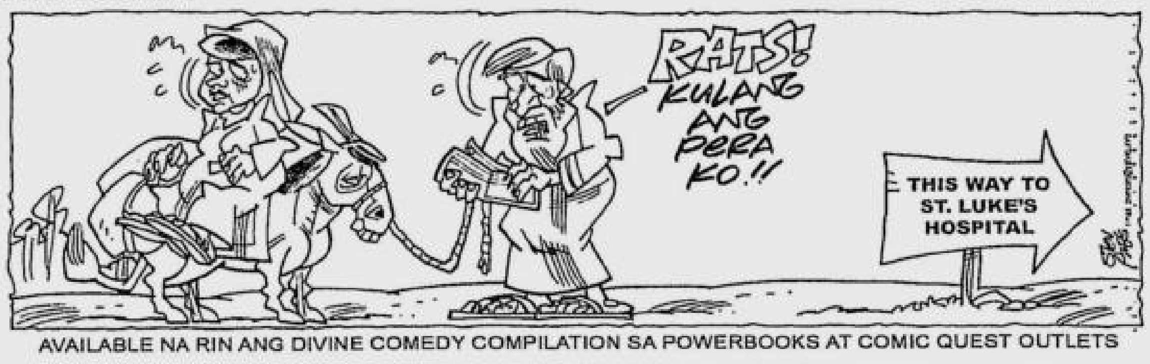
LOVEKNOTS
BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


ANG SABI DAW NG MGA INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS KAILANGAN NATING MAKAPAG-FORECAST...
NG LANDSLIDES AT MUDSLIDES PARA MAKA-SAVE NG BUHAY!!
ABA!! MA-RAMI TAYONG MARUNONG MAG-FORECAST!!
YUNG MGA FORECASTERS NG BUHAY DITO SA QUIAPO!!

ATOMO AND WEBOY
BY LYRA GARCELLANO

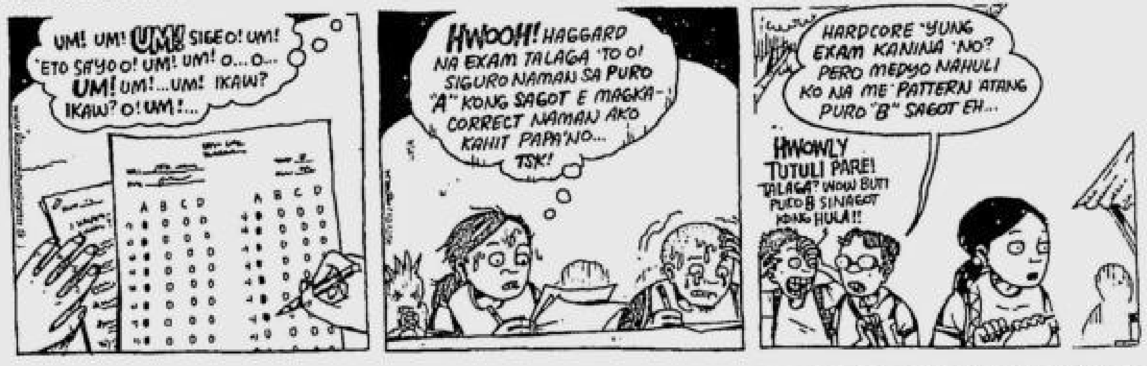

THIRTEEN DAYS TO CHRISTMAS. STILL HAVEN'T FOUND APPRECIATION FOR PRESENTS?
NOPE. BUT I'M NOT WORRIED.
THIS IS JUST A PEBBLE ON THE ROAD TO SELF-AWARENESS.
TOMORROW I START PANICKING.
12/12/06

DIVINE COMEDY
BY STEVEN PABALINAS

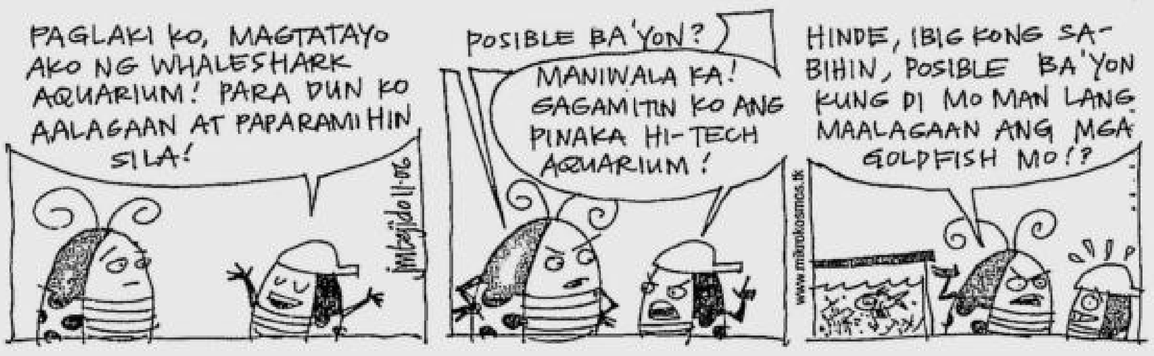

RATS! KULANG ANG PERA KO.!!
THIS WAY TO ST. LUKE'S HOSPITAL

AVAILABLE NA RIN ANG DIVINE COMEDY COMPILATION SA POWERBOOKS AT COMIC QUEST OUTLETS

KIKO MACHINE
BY MANIX ABRERA


UM! UM! UM! SIGEO! UM! 'ETO SA'YO O! UM! UM! O...O... UM! UM!...UM! IKAW? IKAW? O! UM!...
HWOOH! HAGGARD NA EXAM TALAGA 'TO O! SIGURO NAMAN SA PURO "A" KONG SAGOT E MAGKA-CORRECT NAMAN AKO KAHIT PAPA'NO... TSK!
HARDCORE 'YUNG EXAM KANINA 'NO? PERO MEDYO NAHULI KO NA ME' PATTERN ATANG PURO "B" SAGOT EH...
HWOWLY TUTULI PARE! TALAGA? WOW BUTI PURO B SINAGOT KONG HULA!!

MIKROKOSMOS
BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


PAGLAKI KO, MAGTATAYO AKO NG WHALESHARK AQUARIUM! PARA DUN KO AALAGAAN AT PAPARAMIHIN SILA!
POSIBLE BA'YON?
MANIWALA KA! GAGAMITIN KO ANG PINAKA HI-TECH AQUARIUM!
HINDE, IBIG KONG SABIHIN, POSIBLE BA'YON KUNG DI MO MAN LANG MAALAGAAN ANG MGA GOLDFISH MO!?
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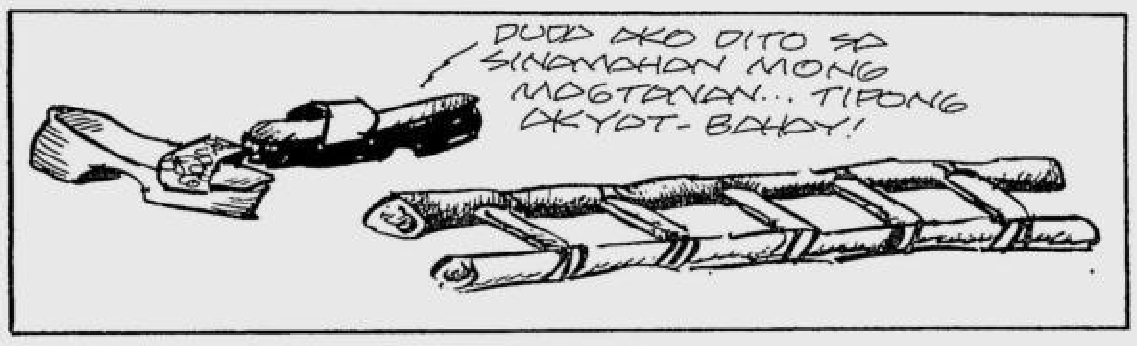
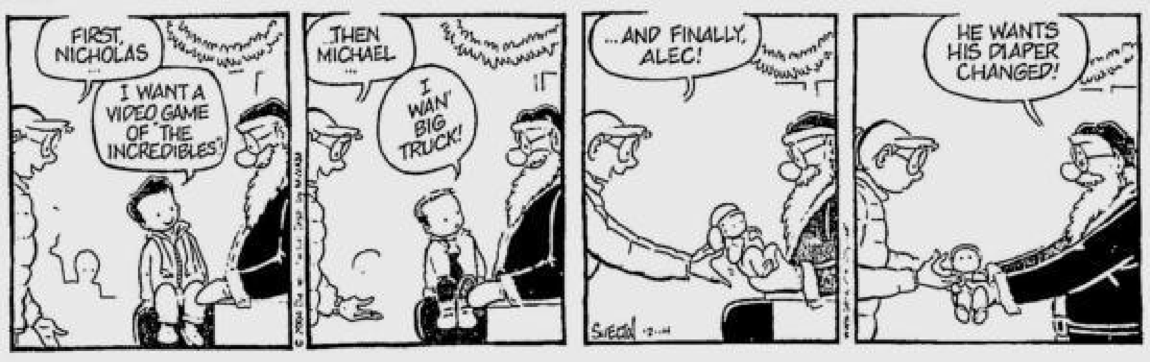
TULDOK
BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


DUDO AKO DITO SA SINAMAHAN MONG MOGTANAN... TIPONG AKYAT-BAHAY!

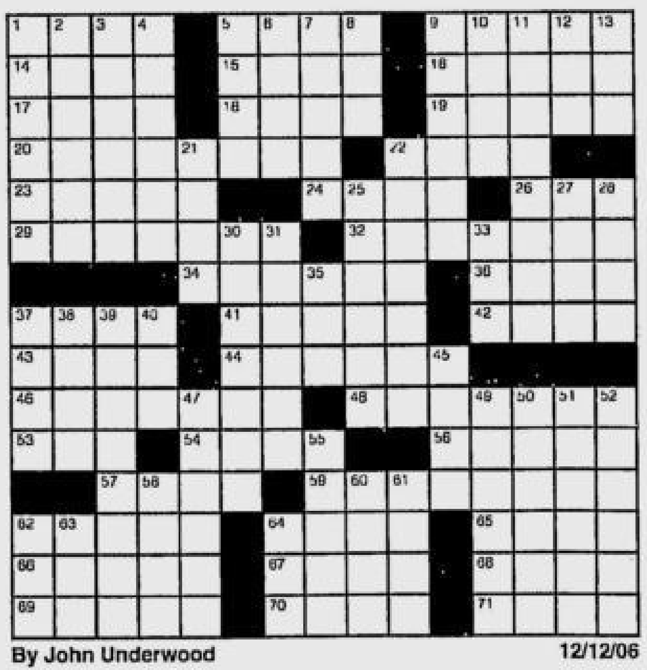
BEN
BY DANIEL SHELTON


FIRST, NICHOLAS...
I WANT A VIDEO GAME OF 'THE INCREDIBLES'!
THEN MICHAEL...
I WAN' BIG TRUCK!
...AND FINALLY, ALEC!
HE WANTS HIS DIAPER CHANGED!

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Simians
5 M. Harmon series
9 Own up
14 __ fide (in bad faith)
15 Speed skater Apolo
16 Male duck
17 Footless
18 Long, long time
19 Actress Uta
20 D. Franz series
22 Shaped with an ax
23 Gloomy, to poets
24 Bellow
26 Sky saucer
29 Uniform atmospheric area
32 Breakfast pitcher
34 Went by dugout
36 Well-known cartel
37 Why don't we?
41 H. Hamlin series
42 Bart Simpson's sister
43 Modifying wds.
44 Heretofore
46 French port
48 Noisy sleepers
53 John's Yoko
54 Conclusions
56 Sell out
57 Buckeye State
59 D. Caruso series
62 Abducted
64 Skillet material
65 High-five sound
66 In what place?
67 Govt. agents
68 "__ kleine Nachtmusik"
69 Propelled a shell
70 R. Urich series
71 Calendar units

DOWN
1 Actress Plummer
2 Ancient Egyptian scrolls
3 Runaway bride
4 Hussein of Iraq
5 Holiday song
6 __ En-lai
7 "__ Sanctum"
8 Distress signal
9 Stick
10 Tie
11 T. Selleck series
12 Likable prez?
13 Downing Street address
21 Bric-a-__
22 Achieved after much effort
25 Where whales roam
27 Payments for services
28 Killer whale
30 Italian seaport
31 Caught in a trap
33 "You've got mail" co.
35 __ Miss
37 Composer Schifrin
38 "East of __"
39 W. Shatner series
40 9-digit ID org.
45 Contemptible character
47 Reticulated
49 Brought up
50 And others
51 Gypsy
52 Actor Wesley
55 Spiral pin
58 At this point
60 Soft drink
61 MIT word
62 Tango number
63 Exclamation of triumph
64 Contingencies



By John Underwood
New York, NY
12/12/06

Monday's Puzzle Solved

L	I	M	O	S	■	C	A	G	Y	■	S	T	O	P
A	D	A	P	T	■	O	H	I	O	■	L	E	N	A
P	A	L	E	R	■	L	E	V	Y	■	I	C	E	R
■	■	T	R	U	S	T	M	E	O	N	T	H	I	S
G	Y	R	A	T	E	■	■	U	S	A	■	I	D	O
R	U	E	■	S	C	O	O	P	■	C	L	E	A	N
A	L	A	S	■	U	R	N	■	F	R	O	■	■	■
B	E	T	T	E	R	B	E	L	I	E	V	E	I	T
■	■	■	A	X	E	■	N	A	G	■	E	A	C	H
A	P	A	R	T	■	A	D	M	A	N	■	S	O	U
S	O	B	■	R	I	B	■	■	R	U	L	I	N	G
S	U	R	E	A	S	S	H	O	O	T	I	N	■	■
U	F	O	S	■	S	O	U	P	■	R	E	E	L	S
R	E	A	P	■	U	R	G	E	■	I	N	S	E	T
E	D	D	Y	■	E	B	O	N	■	A	S	S	A	Y

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12/12/06

HOROSCOPE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're confident and self-possessed. Others enjoy being in your company. You know how to use your body language in an entertaining way. (You're a performer at heart.) Many of you have a fine voice. You're very convincing when you want to be. The year ahead is fun-loving, social and rewarding for relationships.
Birthdate of: Jennifer Connelly, actress; Rajnikanth, Indian actor; Dionne Warwick, singer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Don't be so hasty to be critical of others today, especially coworkers. After all, what goes around comes around. Instead, think about how you can improve your job.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): According to astrology texts, your sign makes the best parent. That's because you know three square meals a day come first. Resist the tendency to be critical of children today. (Forget how far you walked to school as a kid.)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Avoid power struggles with family members and partners today. You have a deep urge to make improvements to where you live. Don't lay this trip on others. Just work according to your own standards.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Quite often, you worry too much. Perhaps it's because you're a constant nurturer. Avoid differences with others today, especially siblings. You feel too passionate about something.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Take care of financial obligations today. Pay your bills. Sort things out. Resist the obsessive urge to buy something. Avoid money squabbles

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Today the Moon is in your sign. You will definitely feel quite emotional about something at some point. Specifically, it's very easy to feel jealous. (Watch out for that green-eyed monster.)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You might have a strong reaction to somebody today simply because someone might say something that triggers fears, self-doubt and jealousies. Just let this go. (No big deal.)

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): A brief, heated conversation with a friend might be anti-productive today. If possible, don't even go there. It won't be worth it.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Don't fly off the handle talking to bosses or parents today. (You know you have a mouth!) Most people cannot take your blunt honesty, even though you mean well.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): You might be disappointed in travel plans. You might also be suspicious about someone who has a different background from yours. Actually, we are all more unlike than not. Everyone wants to be happy; no one wants to suffer.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): A passionate, heated reaction could put you at odds with someone today. Ask yourself if this is really worth it. Do you want this?

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): Be extra-patient when talking to partners, parents, bosses and friends today. Even if you think you know best, they don't want to hear it.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku
by Dave Green

				9	7		4	
1			5				8	9
		1	7				6	5
2		4	8	3	5	1		7
5	9				6	4		
6	7				1			3
	3		9	8				

Difficulty Level ★★
12/12

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.
Tips and program at www.sudoku.com

Answer to previous puzzle

6	7	3	8	9	5	1	4	2
1	8	9	2	4	6	3	7	5
4	5	2	3	7	1	8	9	6
2	3	5	4	1	9	7	6	8
9	1	6	7	5	8	2	3	4
7	4	8	6	2	3	9	5	1
5	9	4	1	3	2	6	8	7
3	6	1	5	8	7	4	2	9
8	2	7	9	6	4	5	1	3

Difficulty Level ★

Sunshine says she's not bothered by Buboy . . .

From page D1

MAYO SUSUKI

mance in "Magpakailanman" recently. He's an underrated actor. He ought to get more breaks instead of more girls.

- Many people are asking why my mom's name is not included in Eastwood's "Walk of Fame." It happens to be a project of **Kuya Germs.** He and my mom go a long way back.

I'm sure he has his reasons—or is it a sin of omission, as mom's loyalists insist?

Candid kid

I INSTANTLY liked **Mayo Susuki**, a 17-year-old Pinay/Japanese charmer who recently launched her debut album "Telling My Heart" (Ivory Records).

Mayo is such a candid kid. She brought the house down during the launch with her funny remarks. Asked about her brewing rift with Sandara Park because of her closeness to Joseph Bitangcol, she replied, "Korean *siya*, Japanese *naman ako. Iba kami.*"

Pink film fest

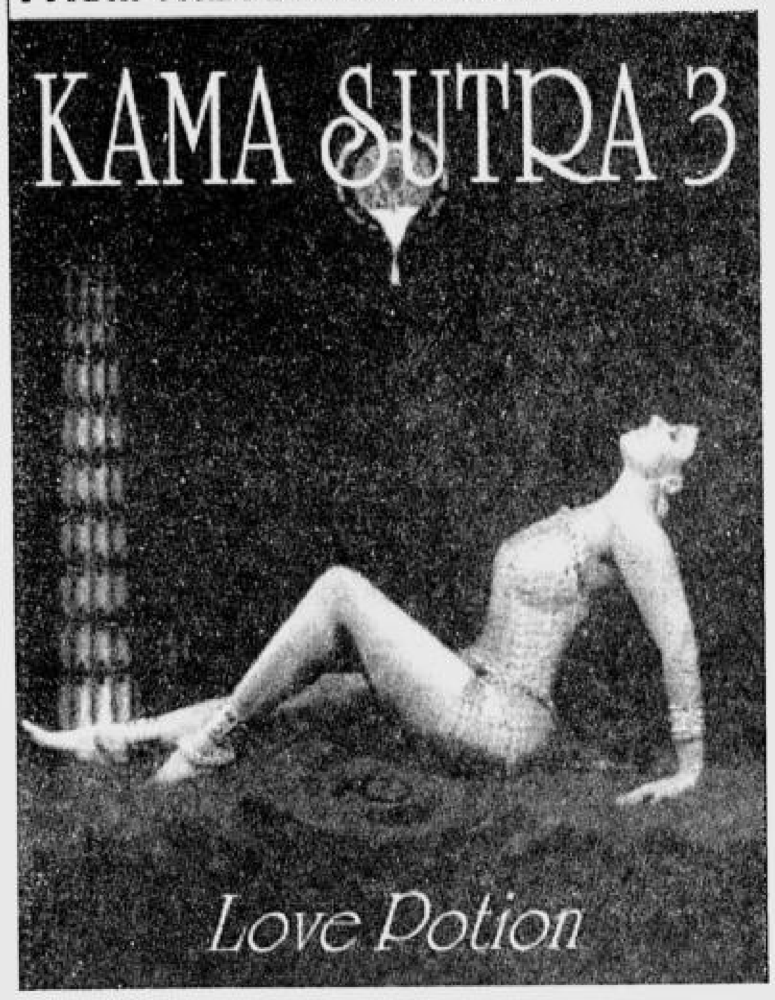
THE PINK Festival (International Gay and Lesbian Film fest) kicks off tomorrow, 6 p.m. at Gateway Cineplex 10 in Araneta Center, Cubao. Visit www.pinkfilmfest.tk.

E-mail wateringholeshangrila@yahoo.com.

MTRCB ▶ R-18 | Strictly for ADULTS No one below 18 yrs. old may be admitted

NOW SHOWING

DISCOVER THE SECRETS FROM THE ANCIENT BOOK OF LOVE



SHANG CINEPLEX

① A GOOD YEAR
MTRCB. PG-13
1 45, 4.30, 7:15, 10:00

② THE NATIVITY
MTRCB. GP
12 20 2 45 5 10 7 35 10 00

③ HAPPY FEET
MTRCB GP
12 05, 2.30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00

④ CASINO ROYALE
MTRCB PG-13
12.55, 4:00, 7 05, 10 10

PREMIERE THEATRE
RIDING ALONE FOR THOUSANDS OF MILES
MTRCB GP

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DECK THE HALLS G 1:45,3:55,6:05,8:15	HAPPY FEET G 1:10,3:30,5:50,8:10	A GOOD YEAR PG13 2:45,5:15,7:45,10:15
CASINO ROYALE 007 PG13 1:15,4:10,7:05,10:00	BORAT R18 2:00,4:00, 6:00,8:00	THE NATIVITY STORY PG13 1:35,3:45,5:55, 8:05,10:15

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Matinee Fee- P200 Primetime Fee- P250

T-REX IN 3D
11:45AM 1:00PM 2:15PM
Admission Price P200

1 CASINO ROYALE
2 GRIDIRON GANG
3 A GOOD YEAR
4 THE NATIVITY
5 DECK THE HALLS
6 REYNA

PREMIERE CINEMA
HAPPY FEET

DIRECTOR'S CLUB
RESERVED

THE PODIUM

CINEMA 1
THE NATIVITY

CINEMA 2
A GOOD YEAR
633-8976

SM NORTH EDSA 929-5452

1 HAPPY FEET
2 THE RETURN
3 WAG KANG LILINGON
4 CASINO ROYALE
5 INANG YAYA
6 A GOOD YEAR
7 HAPPY FEET
8 RESERVED
9 REYNA
10 DECK THE HALLS
11 THE NATIVITY
12 CASINO ROYALE

SM MEGACINEMA 633-1901

1 HAPPY FEET
2 INANG YAYA
3 CASINO ROYALE
4 RESERVED
5 THE RETURN
6 FRAGILE
7 REYNA
8 WAG KANG LILINGON
9 RESERVED
10 HAPPY FEET
11 A GOOD YEAR
12 THANK YOU FOR SMOKING

SM CITY FAIRVIEW 935-0749

1 A GOOD YEAR
2 FRAGILE
3 WAG KANG LILINGON
4 ZU WARRIORS
5 REYNA
6 CASINO ROYALE
7 HAPPY FEET
8 INANG YAYA
9 THE RETURN
10 GIGIL
11 AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH
12 THE NATIVITY

SM CITY STA. MESA 716-1416

1 CASINO ROYALE
2 REYNA
3 HAPPY FEET
4 THE NATIVITY
5 WAG KANG LILINGON
6 DECK THE HALLS
7 A GOOD YEAR
8 THE RETURN
9 REYNA
10 FRAGILE

SM CITY SAN LAZARO 786-2488

1 HAPPY FEET
2 THE NATIVITY
3 A GOOD YEAR
4 REYNA
5 WAG KANG LILINGON
6 INANG YAYA

SM CITY SOUTHMALL 806-6888

1 THE NATIVITY
2 CASINO ROYALE
3 MEE-SHEE
4 HAPPY FEET
5 REYNA
6 INANG YAYA
7 A GOOD YEAR
8 WAG KANG LILINGON
9 THE RETURN

SM CITY BICUTAN 776-3055

1 THE NATIVITY
2 REYNA
3 INANG YAYA
4 HAPPY FEET

SM CITY MANILA 523-9240

1 AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH
2 THE RETURN
3 THE NATIVITY
4 FRAGILE
5 HAPPY FEET
6 CASINO ROYALE
7 REYNA
8 GIGIL
9 PITONG DALAGITA
10 A GOOD YEAR
11 WAG KANG LILINGON
12 INANG YAYA

SM CITY DASMARINAS (046)4323301-04

1 HAPPY FEET
2 REYNA
3 BOA
4 DECK THE HALLS

SM VALENZUELA 293-3917

1 HAPPY FEET
2 THE RETURN
3 DECK THE HALLS
4 REYNA

SM CITY SUCAT 829-4975

1 THE NATIVITY
2 INANG YAYA
3 HAPPY FEET
4 REYNA

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MTRCB Rating: PG-13

SM CITY BACOOR (046)417-3868

1 REYNA
2 A GOOD YEAR
3 FRAGILE
4 CASINO ROYALE
5 HAPPY FEET
6 WAG KANG LILINGON
7 INANG YAYA
8 THE NATIVITY

SM CITY CLARK (045)625-5844-45

1 HAPPY FEET
2 CASINO ROYALE
3 FRAGILE
4 WAG KANG LILINGON
5 REYNA
6 PITONG DALAGITA

SM CITY MARILAO (044)9332013-17

1 HAPPY FEET
2 WAG KANG LILINGON
3 REYNA
4 INANG YAYA

LUZON

SM CITY BATANGAS 885-6401-04

1 FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS
2 SANTA CLAUSE 3
3 ANG PAMANA
4 FRAGILE

SM CITY PAMPANGA (045)9637681-85

1 CASINO ROYALE
2 REYNA
3 ZU WARRIORS
4 ANG PAMANA
5 INANG YAYA
6 FRAGILE

SM CIY LIPA (043) 756-7925

1 CASINO ROYALE
2 REYNA
3 FEAST
4 ANG PAMANA

SM CITY LUCENA (042)7108977-80

1 THE PRESTIGE
2 HAPPY FEET
3 WAG KANG LILINGON
4 SANTA CLAUSE 3

SM CITY BAGUIO (074)6197838-39

1 REYNA
2 FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS
3 HAPPY FEET
4 THE MARINE

SM SUPERCENTER MOLINO (046)474-3160

1 HAPPY FEET
2 INANG YAYA
3 THE RETURN
4 REYNA

SM CITY STA. ROSA (049)5341265-66

1 HAPPY FEET
2 THE MARINE
3 ANG PAMANA
4 REYNA

SM CITY CEBU (032)231-3876

1 RESERVED
2 FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS
3 THE MARINE
4 THE NATIVITY
5 WAG KANG LILINGON
6 REYNA
7 HAPPY FEET
8 CASINO ROYALE

VISAYAS MINDANAO

SM CITY ILOILO (033)3209422

1 REYNA
2 RESERVED
3 HAPPY FEET
4 SANTA CLAUSE 3
5 THE NATIVITY
6 CASINO ROYALE
7 RESERVED
8 ANG PAMANA

SM CITY DAVAO (082)2976998

1 CASINO ROYALE
2 ANG PAMANA
3 REYNA
4 INANG YAYA
5 HAPPY FEET
6 THE NATIVITY

SM CITY CAGAYAN (088)859-2884

1 THE NATIVITY
2 HAPPY FEET
3 SANTA CLAUSE 3
4 CASINO ROYALE

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GALLERIA 632-9116

1 CASINO ROYALE • THX
1:00 4:00 7:00 10:00

2 HAPPY FEET
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

3 KAMA SUTRA 3
12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8:00 10:00

4 THE NATIVITY STORY
12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00

5 A GOOD YEAR
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

6 Reserved for VICTORY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

7 REYNA
12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00

8 BORAT
1:30 3:35 5:40 7:45 9:50

9 DECK THE HALLS
1:30 3:35 5:40 7:45 9.50

10 THE RETURN
1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 THE NATIVITY STORY
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

2 A GOOD YEAR
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

3 HAPPY FEET
11:00 1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50

4 CASINO ROYALE
11:00 1:40 4:20 7:00 9:50

5 THE RETURN
10:10 12:35 2:50 5:05 7:25 9:50

6 REYNA
10:10 12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 9:50

7 A GOOD YEAR
10:10 12:10 2:10 4:10 6:10 8:10 10:00

METRO EAST 682-8193 / 682-8199

1 THE RETURN
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

2 HAPPY FEET
11:05 1:35 4:05 6:35 9:05

3 A GOOD YEAR
1:05 3:45 6:25 9:05

4 THE NATIVITY STORY
11:30 1:55 4:20 6:45 9:10

5 FRAGILE
12:50 2:50 4.50 6:50 9:00

6 KAMA SUTRA 3
12:50 2.50 4:50 6:50 9:00

7 CASINO ROYALE
12:00 3:00 6:00 9:00

8 REYNA
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

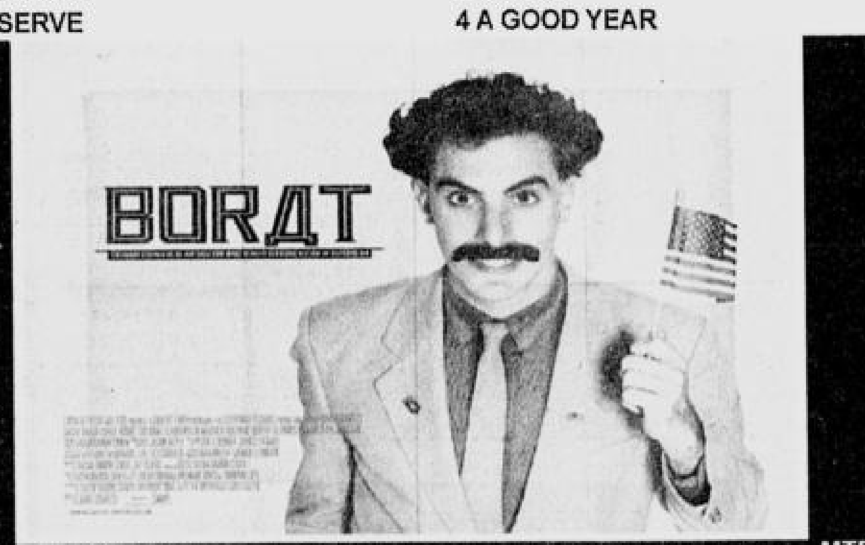
1 KAMA SUTRA 3
2 A GOOD YEAR
3 REYNA
4 HAPPY FEET

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575

1 REYNA
2 INANG YAYA
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 THE NATIVITY STORY
2 HAPPY FEET
3 REYNA
4 A GOOD YEAR



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STA. ROSA (049) 837-0907

1 THE MARINE
2 ANG PAMANA:THE INHERITANCE
3 REYNA
4 HAPPY FEET

LIPA (043) 757-3664 (043) 312-5870

1 FLAGS OF OUR FATHERS
2 FEAST
3 BORAT
4 REYNA

DASMARINAS (046) 852-2125 (046) 416-4332

1 DECK THE HALLS
2 ANG PAMANA:THE INHERITANCE
3 REYNA
4 HAPPY FEET

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 FRAGILE
2 KALELDO
3 REYNA
4 BORAT

IMUS (046) 875-3838 (046) 471-8188

1 HAPPY FEET
2 A GOOD YEAR
3 CASINO ROYALE
4 REYNA

STARMILLS (045) 875-1927 (045) 961-5270

1 HAPPY FEET
2 KALELDO
3 REYNA
4 BORAT
5 SANTA CLAUSE 3
6 FRAGILE

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 (034) 441-0459

1 HAPPY FEET
2 EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH
3 CASINO ROYALE
4 ANG PAMANA:THE INHERITANCE
5 REYNA
6 BOA

ILOILO (033) 336-8070

1 SANTA CLAUSE 3
2 THE NATIVITY STORY
3 HAPPY FEET
4 REYNA

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FEEDBACK

Hey, dudes!

From Teci Pulido (tecigirl@gmail.com), Modesta Village, San Mateo:

We were watching "Eat Bulaga" today (Dec. 1) and heard Mr. Joey de Leon commenting on the inconvenience of having canceled shows and tapings because of mega-typhoon Reming. He said that next time, there should be cancellations *"kapag umuulan na talaga."*

I found that shortsighted and selfish. I, for one, applaud Pag-Asa and Malacañang's efforts to be cautious and warn the people ahead of time. It was a far cry from years past, when classes and offices were suspended too late in the day, when most people had already gone out. Which is more inconvenient, Mr. de Leon?

From Sanny Cruz (smcruz2@hotmail.com) 129 Plassey Street, Penarth, Wales, UK:

I caught excerpts of Miss Earth 2006 on youtube.com. Ariel Ureta's hosting style didn't cut it for me. I found him rude and his jokes, inappropriate. He interrupted Miss Venezuela, who was still speaking, by saying "Enough, enough." He told Ms. Egypt, "No cheating." I hope next year's organizers will assign someone better!

A slip?

From Tessa Cam (tessa.cam@gmail.com) The Asia Tower, Makati City:

"The highs and lows of F/X" By Bayani San Diego Jr. published in the Nov. 21 issue said: "The movie's computer-generated effects are being executed by Geebo Digital Studios Inc., a 3-D animation company in Mandaluyong responsible for Hollywood movies 'Golem' and 'Hoodwinked.'"

Please be informed that all visible digital elements were created by Digital Eye Candy Inc., Animation Studio (Philippines). Some scenes of the movie were rendered and lit by Prana Studios (India). "Hoodwinked" is by no means connected to or affiliated with Geebo Digital Studios Inc.

From DEC (twiceasuseless@yahoo.com) Makati City:

"Hoodwinked" was not made by Geebo. It was purely made by Digital Eye Candy, Inc. with a little help from Prana (India). Please confirm things first before posting articles to avoid stealing credits from other companies' hard work.

Filmmaker Quark Henares, who was interviewed for that piece, clarified that he was referring to Ted Godwin, the visual effects supervisor of "Super Noypi." He explained: "Godwin is with Geebo now, but he was the art director for Digital Eye Candy, which did 'Hoodwinked.'"

GREENHILLS CINEMAS
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Cinema	Movie	Times	Rating
1	DECK THE HALLS	11:35, 1:40, 3:45, 5:50, 7:55, 10:00	PG-13
2	THE NATIVITY STORY	11:00, 1:20, 3:40, 6:00, 8:20, 10:35	GP

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Cinema	Movie	Times	Rating
3	A GOOD YEAR	12:35, 3:05, 5:35, 8:05, 10:35	PG-13
4	CASINO ROYALE	12:10, 3:20, 6:30, 9:40	PG13
5	HAPPY FEET	11:00, 1:15, 3:35, 5:55, 8:15, 10:35	GP

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MUSIC MUSEUM

DEC 11, 2006	Apo Hiking Society	8:30 PM
DEC 16, 2006	Nyoy Volante	9:00 PM

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EVERY MONDAY	DANCE NIGHT	7:00PM
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Cinema	Movie	Times	Rating
1	A GOOD YEAR	2:55, 5:40, 8:25, 11:00	PG-13
2	HAPPY FEET	1:05, 3:35, 6:05, 8:35, 11:00	G
3	CASINO ROYAL	1:10, 4:20, 7:30, 10:40	PG-13
4	THE NATIVITY	1:20, 3:45, 6:10, 8:35, 11:00	G

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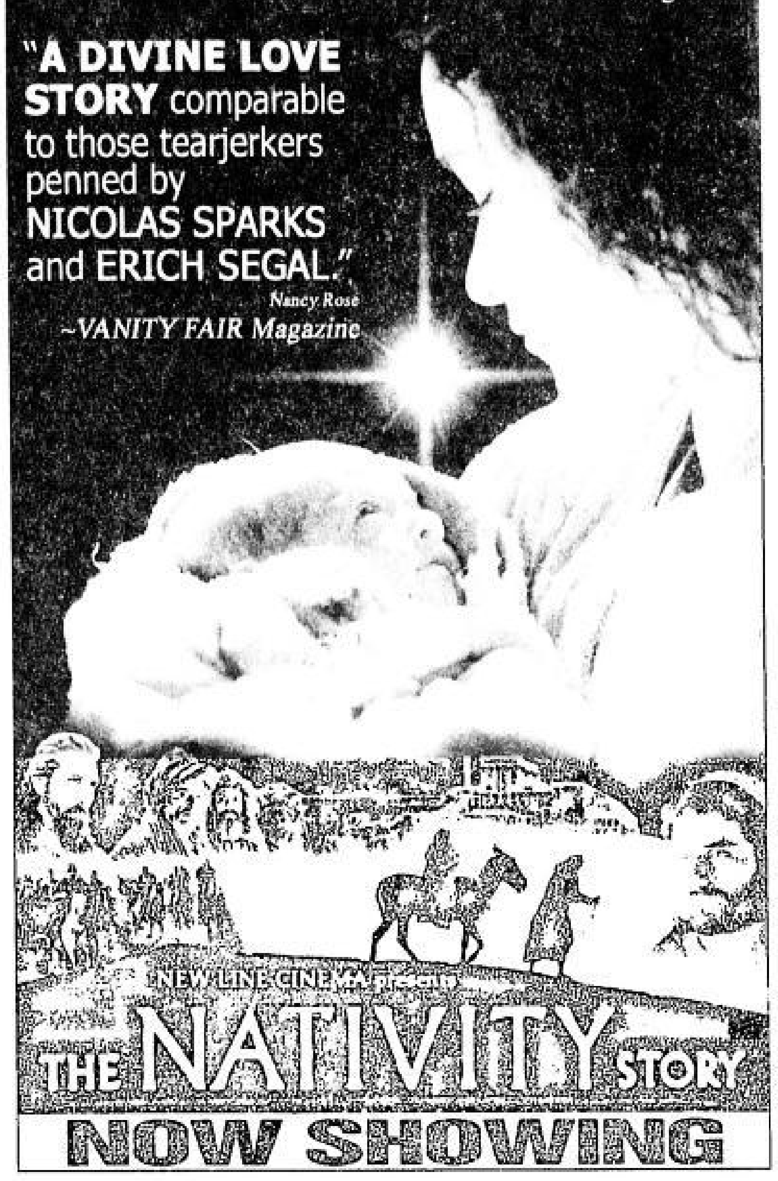
~VANITY FAIR Magazine



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SARAH MICHELLE GELLAR
THE RETURN

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	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
G1 GLORIETTA 1	REYNA	THE NATIVITY	HAPPY FEET	INANG YAYA			
G4 GLORIETTA 4	THE NATIVITY	BORAT	THX CASINO ROYALE 1:30, 4:30, 7:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	A GOOD YEAR	THE RETURN	HAPPY FEET	ALL THE KING'S MEN
GB1 GREENBELT 1	HAPPY FEET	THE NATIVITY					
GB3 GREENBELT 3	THX A GOOD YEAR 1:40, 4:00, 6:20, 8:40, 11:00 GUARANTEED SEATS	THX HAPPY FEET 1:55, 4:15, 6:35, 8:55, 11:15 GUARANTEED SEATS	CASINO ROYALE 2:15, 5:05, 7:55, 10:45 GUARANTEED SEATS	ALL THE KING'S MEN 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS	THE NATIVITY 2:56, 5:00, 7:05, 9:10, 11:15 GUARANTEED SEATS		
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	THX THE NATIVITY GUARANTEED SEATS	A GOOD YEAR	HAPPY FEET	DECK THE HALLS	CASINO ROYALE		
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	THE NATIVITY	HAPPY FEET	THE MARINE	REYNA			
M2 MARKET! MARKET!	REYNA	THE NATIVITY	A GOOD YEAR	HAPPY FEET	INANG YAYA		

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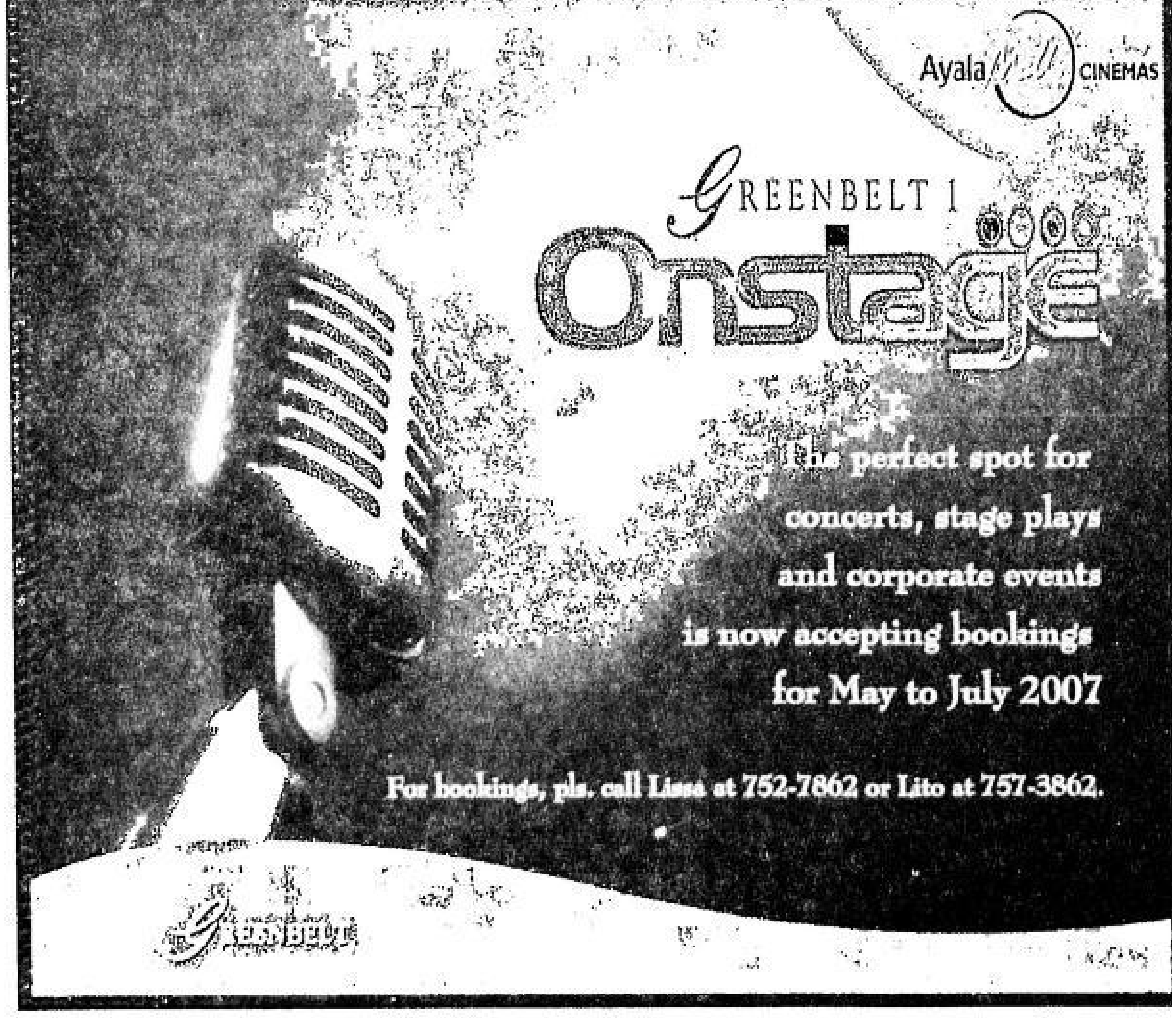

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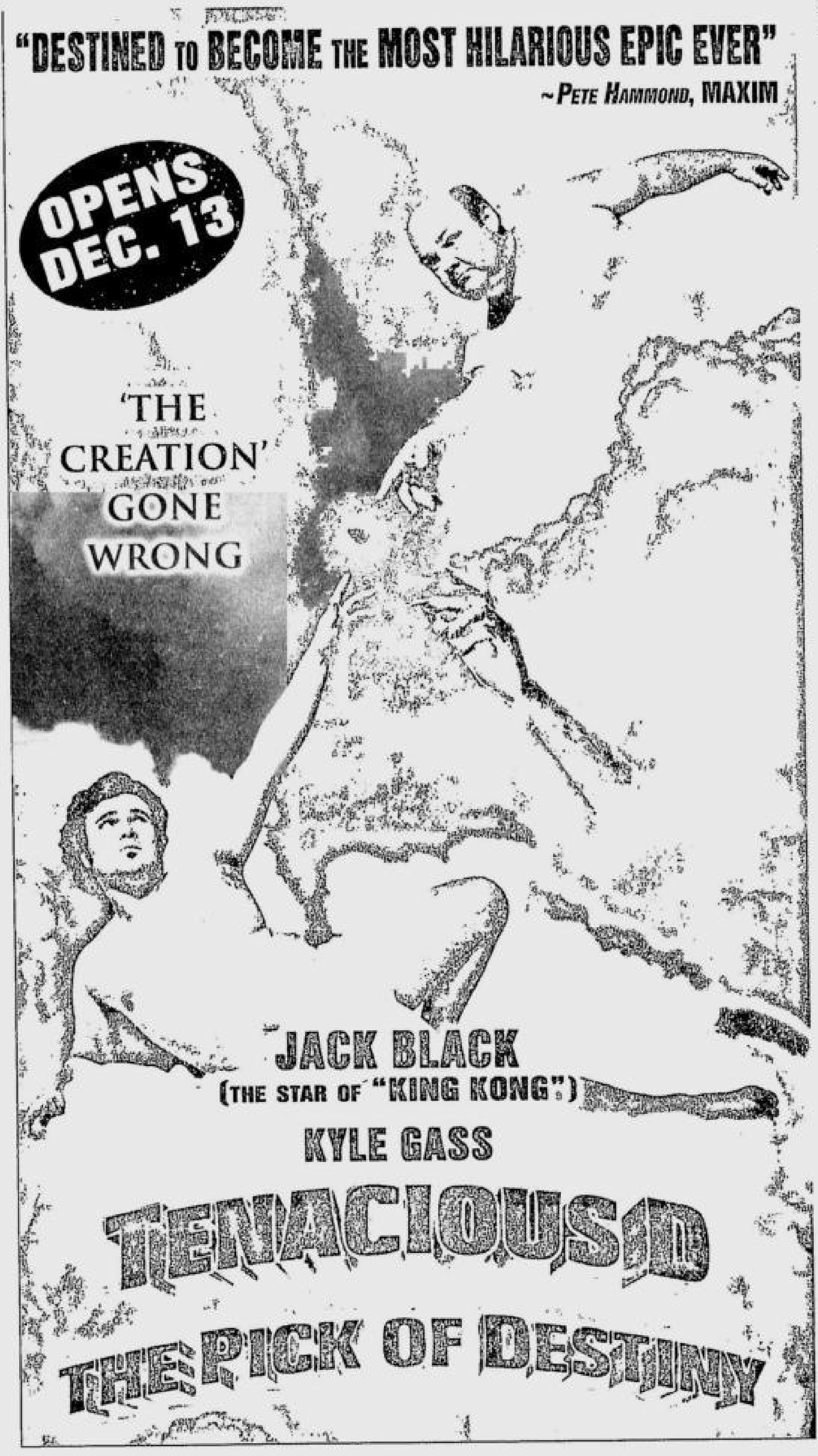
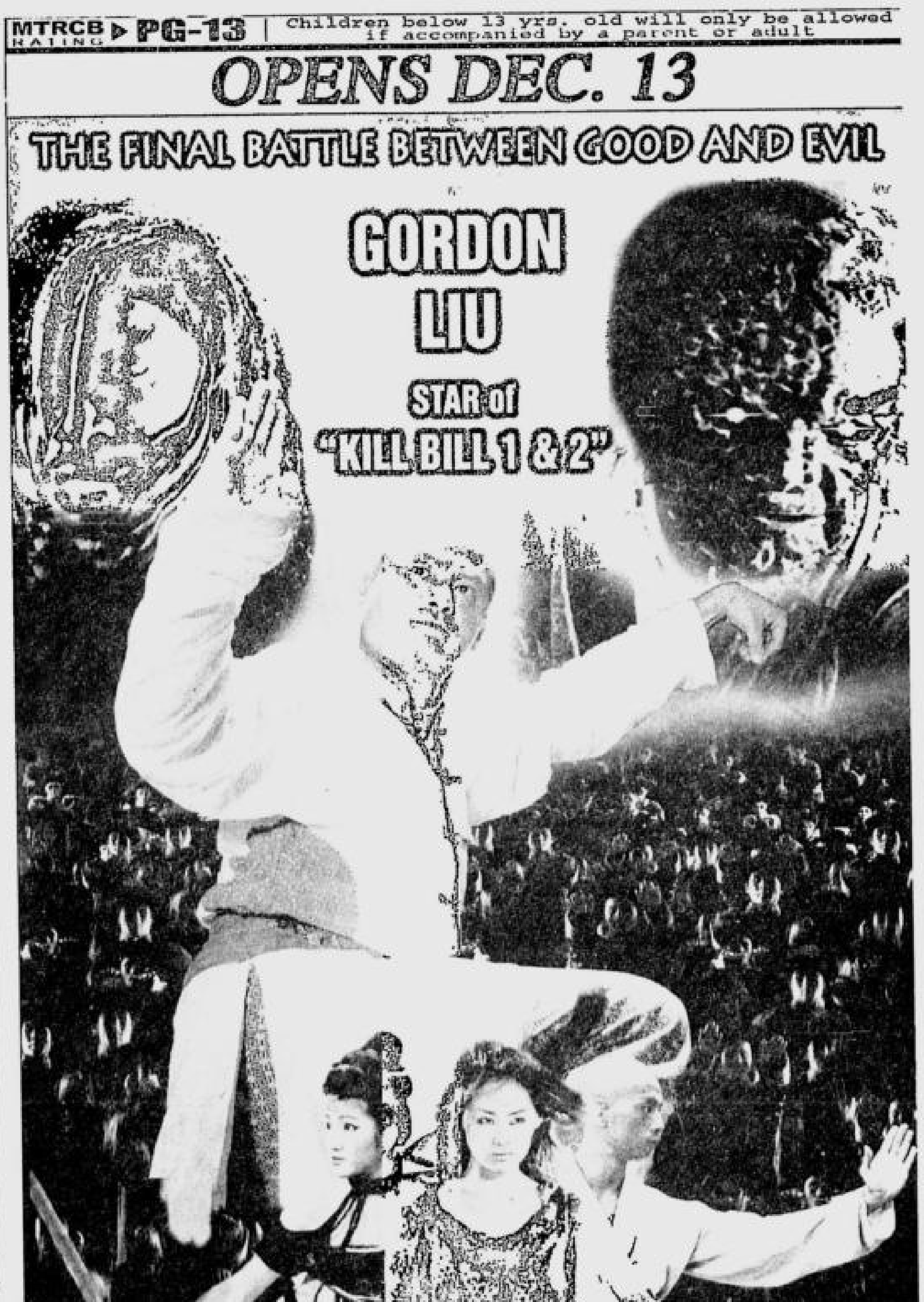
Separated by work

Hot partners Cameron Diaz and Justin Timberlake were separated by work yet again last week. Cameron was with Jude Law promoting their movie together, "The Holiday," in Hamburg. Justin, far right, performed at the Honda Center in Anaheim. REUTERS


"DESTINED TO BECOME THE MOST HILARIOUS EPIC EVER"
~PETE HAMMOND, MAXIM
OPENS DEC. 13
'THE CREATION' GONE WRONG
JACK BLACK
(THE STAR OF "KING KONG")
KYLE GASS
TENACIOUS D
THE PICK OF DESTINY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OPENS DEC. 13
THE FINAL BATTLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL
GORDON LIU
STAR of "KILL BILL 1 & 2"
SHAOLIN VS 2 EVIL DEAD

Christ's birth lovingly recalled

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

TALK ABOUT PERFECT TIMING, **Catherine Hardwicke's** "The Nativity Story" is being released worldwide a few weeks before Christmas, which marks the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ—precisely the landmark event that the film dramatizes and vivifies.

This well-timed release adds the factor of specific significance to the movie's screening, as Christians gratefully patronize the production, because it helps them get into the spirit of Christmas by celebrating the birth of God-made-man.

On the other hand, the film's all too well-known events threaten to render it predictable and partly pious, so we wonder how its makers will be able to rise above these numbing and deadening tendencies.

Fresh approach

The good news is that director Hardwicke occasionally succeeds in telling "the greatest story in the world" in a relatively fresh and involving way.

The central relationship of Mary and Joseph is simply but tellingly limited, as the two young protagonists relate to each other as human beings, instead of as preordained participants in a divine drama over which they have absolutely no control.

It also helps that the film avoids "*estampita*" sentimentality and piousness by presenting its character as flesh-and-blood humans. There is a welcome emphasis on the fact that Jesus was born into a very poor family.

In keeping with this slant, everyone is shown working practically all the time—and we're grateful for this, because most "religious" movies are peopled by saintly characters who don't do much other than pray and sigh.

It's also good that the film dramatizes the story's political context, with the Israelites forever being squeezed dry by their Jewish and Roman overloads, thus pushing them to yearn for the arrival of the Messiah prophesied to free them from their abject thralldom.

In addition, the movie fleshes out its characters more fully than usual for productions of this spiritual kind. Aside from Mary and Joseph, the Three Wise Men also benefit from this, as they transcend their iconic identities and bicker with and poke fun at each other as they follow the Christmas star that shines over the Christ child in the manger.

Predictable

Unfortunately, "The Nativity" has its share of flaws and limitations as well. The main problem that it solves only occasionally is the matter of predictability. There's also a tendency to come off as holy with a capital H, and for its characters to assume pious poses.

At other times, the script's creativity falters, and the production resorts to standard "biblical" depiction of events in too facile and knee jerk a fashion.

But in general, "The Nativity" is viewable because it reminds us of the sacrifice of Christ for mankind's salvation.

It focuses on Christ's birth, but in that very decision to be born poor and suffer with the rest of humanity, God-made-flesh expressed most convincingly His love for us.

A picture perfect campaign

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL (NGC) HAS TEAMED up with Sony Ericsson to launch "Windows Into Asia," a campaign that encourages viewers to celebrate life by capturing memorable moments with Sony Ericsson's superior imaging phones.

The campaign features a series of 60-, 30- and 10-second on air vignettes of pictures captured by NGC photographer Matthieu Paley who explored diverse cultures, landscapes and sceneries using Sony Ericsson's 3.2 megapixel Cyber-shot phone.

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